

SRI AUROBINDO'S HUMOUR

(CORRESPONDENCE PART III)

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Publishers' Note

The author's book "Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo" (Part II) has already presented a new and, to the general public, quite unfamiliar aspect of Sri Aurobindo — his humour. But in this book is presented the same theme with an intensity of concentration and a further profusion of new material.

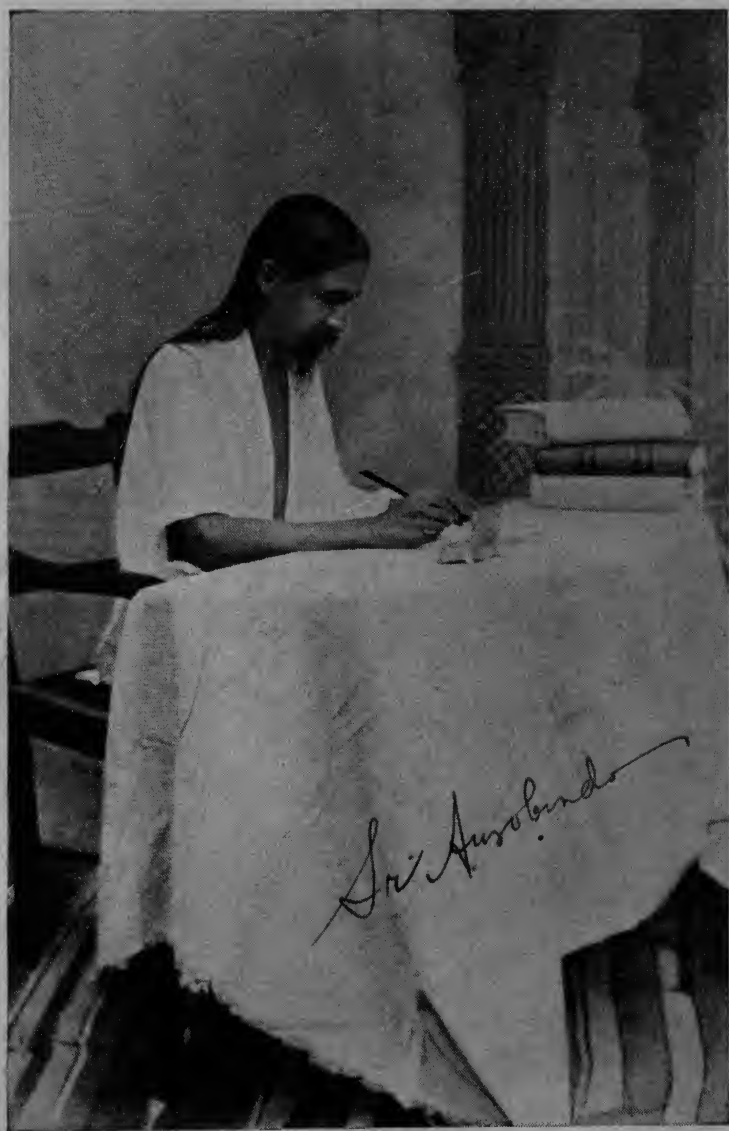
We have the pleasure to state that the Government of India have given us a grant to meet a part of the cost of the publication.

Preface

This Book of Humour is a compilation from my Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo during 1933-1938 which appeared in book-form many years ago. Here, only those extracts have been taken which are exclusively humorous. There are many other letters, besides, which are new and are appearing for the first time.

Sri Aurobindo has established himself in the heart of the world as a great Yogi, Seer-poet, philosopher, to name only three facets of his multiform creative genius. But a faint murmur was heard that in this many-splendoured personality, there was a serious void caused by the absence of humour. This book will show that he was no less a genius in this popular field and he could, if he wanted, flood one with torrents of cosmic laughter on any subject, on any occasion, without a moment's thinking. When he wrote to a disciple: "Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance — it is unbalanced enough already — and rushed to blazes long ago", how could he himself be devoid of any sense of laughter? Only, it needed, I suppose, the suitable time and occasion for the Delight to come out and manifest. Some of us were fortunate enough to be the recipients of his divine levity and able to share with the world the joy of knowing that Sri Aurobindo himself was *raso vai sah*, "Verily he is the Delight".

NIRODBARAN



Sri Ausobinda

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Humour)

6. 5. 33

MYSELF: Mother, you gave me a searching look during the Pranam.

SRI AUROBINDO: You looked depressed, so Mother looked at you — there was no other search.

7. 5. 33

MYSELF: Mother, one mistaken idea seems to trouble me for some time. I feel that in the evening whenever my eyes catch your look, you suddenly turn it away. I come to see you with some misapprehension that you may not look at me. I am sure there is no truth in my imagination.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, there is no truth in it. It is your own idea — your apprehension and misapprehension that produce in you the misconception that Mother does not want to look at you !

28. 5. 33

MYSELF: Sometimes I think that you are giving me a taste of the cup of bliss in very small drops, and at long intervals, but I do not at all despair.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no reason certainly for despair. The bliss always comes in drops at first, or a broken trickle. You have to go on cheerfully and in full confidence, till there is the cascade.

7. 11. 33

MYSELF: I try to leave myself in your hands entirely.

Am I wrong in my attitude or am I to cry constantly into your ears ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not constantly, but from time to time.

30. 12. 33

MYSELF: Mother, your meaningful and reproachful look in the morning, put me out of all good cheer. The Divine pushes me to such tests when he knows me so well — and then there awaits me a none-too-happy look from you !

SRI AUROBINDO: That is an imagination, as usual. There was no reproach.... The imagination of a none-too-happy look ! I repeat there was no reproach.

12. 2. 34

MYSELF: May I be permitted to see you on the 16th instant — the *centenary* of my arrival here ?

SRI AUROBINDO [underlining the word 'centenary', putting an interrogation-mark above it]: I say, you have not been here 100 years, surely !

7. 3. 34

MYSELF: Mother, from your look during the Pranam it seemed to me you didn't or don't like our taking food exclusive of Ashram food.

SRI AUROBINDO: How did you read food into the Mother's look ? It was not there at all.

Why don't you go on what the Mother says instead of taking all this intuitive or inferential trouble ?

10. 4. 34

MYSELF: I send you a poem. I didn't send it yester-

day because it was the day of our vengeance¹ and who knows my little verse might have been the last straw. But since all people profit at your expense. it wouldn't be wiser for me to stand aloof. So the poem and your kind opinion on it.

SRI AUROBINDO: My opinion is "good, but not good enough" — more stuff is needed.

It is good you did not throw your straw on the waters yesterday — the flood might have carried it away into the beginning of next week.

31. 8. 34

MYSELF: Guru, so permission for Darshan given to S. Majumdar and staying with Dilipda too? I also know him, he is really a fine man.

Dilipda promises me a kingdom for a wire. If I can get your answer today, well, the kingdom will be one day earlier, as the wire will go today.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can wire and become a king at once.

14. 11. 34

MYSELF: Can you spare me a canvas cot, if any? If you can, please sanction some mosquito frame arrangement too.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ask for the canvas cot and a mosquito frame to be used with. Impossible to hang a mosquito frame on the independent principle here.

16. 12. 34

MYSELF: If I remember right, you wrote to me that work is only a means for the preparation of the spiritual life; otherwise, it does not have much value.

¹ Usually nobody wrote letters to Sri Aurobindo on Sundays, but all took "vengeance" on Mondays by sending double the quantity.

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord God ! When did I make this stupendous statement which destroys at one fell sweep the two volumes of the *Essays on the Gita* and all the seven volumes of the *Arya* ?...

MYSELF: My own impression is that work is an excellent means as a preparation, but the major experiences and realisations are not likely to come through work.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see. When the time for preparation is over, one will sit immobile for ever after and never do any work — for as you say, work and realisation cannot go together. Hurrah, for the Himalayas ! Well, but why not then the old Yoga ? Let us go back to the cave and the forest.

MYSELF: My theory about work hampering one-pointed concentration finds some support, I think, from your own example. You have said that 9/10th part of your time is spent in correspondence, works etc., whereas only 1/10th is devoted to concentration.

SRI AUROBINDO: For me correspondence alone. I have no time left for other “works etc.” Concentration and meditation are not the same thing. One can be concentrated in work or bhakti as well as in meditation. For God’s sake be very careful about your vocabulary, or else you will tumble into many errors and loosenesses of thinking.

MYSELF: Did you not retire for five or six years for an exclusive and intensive meditation ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not aware that I did so. But my biographers probably know more about it than I do.

...You will excuse the vein of irony or satire in all this — but really when I am told that my own case disproves my own spiritual philosophy and accumulated knowledge and experience, a little liveliness in answer is permissible.

22. 12. 34

MYSELF: Is it possible to have the highest Sachchidananda realisation in work ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly it is realisable in work. Good Lord ! How could the integral Yoga exist if it were not ?

MYSELF: Please excuse my asking these questions, as your Yoga is so new, at least the Karma Yoga part of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Karma Yoga is as old as the hills. What is this nonsense about its absolute newness ? Donner Wetter ! Tausend Teufel !

MYSELF: If we question you repeatedly about it, please excuse us.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but if I have to write the same thing over and over again for each sadhak — well !

25. 12. 34

MYSELF: Do you think learning sitar will be useful for me ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see much use in sitarring — but if you do !

MYSELF: Your German has become Greek to me, Sir ! It is illegible. Dilip wants to know if one is *Teufel* meaning fiend.

SRI AUROBINDO: These are swearings in German: Donner Wetter (thundering weather) Tausend Teufel (thousand devils = French, Mille diables).

26. 12. 34

MYSELF: When I wrote about the absolute newness of your Yoga, you swore at me in German !

SRI AUROBINDO: Not my yoga — Karma yoga. The

Karma yoga element in my Yoga is not new.

MYSELF: Yes, in the Gita it is there, to be sure, but has it been done through timber-cutting, bread-kneading, cooking, etc., etc. ? Janakas¹ and Arjunas might, but not Nirodu or Rama-Shyamas² !

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nothing new in that either. It has always been a rule of Karma yoga that one must be ready to do any work for the Divine or with the spiritual consciousness.

Why not Rama Shyama ? Plenty of Ramas and Shyamas have done that kind of Karma yoga and done it easily enough.

2. 1. 35

MYSELF: I am rather puzzled by X's failures or up-sets. I fear sometimes the same fate may overtake me.

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose you always avoided getting into a railway train because there might be a collision, or into a steamer for similar reasons and certainly you would never dare go in an aeroplane !

MYSELF: All these cases of failures prove what ? I fear the same reasons may operate on me and I may behave exactly like an insane person.

SRI AUROBINDO: What you say may apply to everybody because everybody has things in him which conflict with the Yoga. Logical conclusion: Nobody should try anything in which anybody has failed or in which there is a possibility of failure ! I am afraid most human activities would stop on that principle except *আহার, নিদ্রা ও বিবাহ* [food, sleep and sex] and perhaps only the first two. But after all not even these — for people die in their sleep and others die of their food by poison, indigestion or otherwise. So to be safe one must neither eat, sleep nor do anything else — much less do Yoga. Q. E. D.

¹ Janaka : King of Mithila during the time of the Ramayana.

² Rama-Shyamas : Tom, Dick, Harry.

4. 1. 35

MYSELF: In meditation, I had again a stillness of the inner and the outer being, but the body was gradually bending down as if I were in a light sleep. I could remember that you were there and others besides. Was that a state of sleep due to a full stomach?

SRI AUROBINDO: Is that the medical man's explanation of the experience? If a full stomach can produce experiences, you might perhaps treble or quadruple your rations.

5. 1. 35

MYSELF: Forgive me if I quarrel with you today, you have hinted that I am a coward!

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a coward in every human being, precisely the part in him which insists on "safety" — for that is certainly not a brave attitude. I admit however that I would like safety myself if I could have it — perhaps that is why I have always managed instead to live dangerously and follow the dangerous paths dragging so many poor Nirods in my train.

MYSELF: I am stunned to see you mention Yoga and other human activities in the same breath. Is it not Sri Krishna who said that out of thousands very few seek him and still fewer get him?

SRI AUROBINDO: There are those who try for a Govt. post and only a few get it! It is the same principle everywhere.

MYSELF: Let me tell you how a born yogi felt and feels about Yoga. He says often to us that on many occasions he has felt like running away, never mind to which hell! What then of us, born-biyogis?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not aware that there are born yogis or unborn yogis. All have their vital and mental

difficulties, whether born or unborn.

MYSELF: To add to all this, you hardly take an initiative and ask persons to do this or that. Your principle is to give a long rope either to hang oneself or have a taste of the bitter cup.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am to put everybody into leading strings and walk about with them or should it be a rope in their nose? Supermen cannot be made like that — the long rope is needed.

MYSELF: When I went on reading and reading in the godown, you said nothing till the blow came.

SRI AUROBINDO: Reading in a godown does not end tragically as a rule.

MYSELF: I come to do Yoga with all sincerity but end by being a tool in depression's hands. Isn't it tragic and pathetic? This side of the shield I request you to see.

SRI AUROBINDO: Gracious heavens! you *are* really a poet.

MYSELF: Your caustic satire about the railways is, with all apology, a little beside the point. Firstly, I have dared Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not go on daring instead of wailing because there is no safety?

MYSELF: In railways etc. the journey is safe; the hostile forces are not so villainous. But even after a Herculean effort, the path of Yoga is not a jot easier.

SRI AUROBINDO: You ought to read the *Matin*. Every now and then a tremendous collision and holocaust. I admit that in India railway is slow and scanty and therefore more though not quite safe. Anyway, what about aeroplanes?

MYSELF: It is very problematic, however, as to how many will reach your Heaven alive, like Yudhishtir.

SRI AUROBINDO: And his dog, you have forgotten the dog.

MYSELF: I am afraid most of us will have the fate

of the Pandavas — barring the ladies !

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce has sex to do here ? Don't be too medical.

MYSELF: Because medical science says that their physiological apparatus is more suitable for the psychological attitude of self-abnegation which is also the essential desideratum for Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the only thing for which their physiological apparatus works ? I fear there are other things, both in male and female which are not essential desiderata for Yoga.

8. 1. 35

MYSELF: I hope you have understood the psychology behind all my wailings. My headache and fear are that you allow the other forces to take away some of the poor Nirods from your 'train', being weary of the fight, perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me, I don't allow — the poor Nirods allow or they take themselves away in a huff.

MYSELF: But I sincerely pray that you will drag this really poor Nirod in your train till his last breath !

SRI AUROBINDO: What else am I doing but dragging towards that ?

MYSELF: You call me a poet ? A poet without poems ? A briefless barrister ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was the *uchchhwass*¹ that extorted that exclamation from me.

10. 1. 35

MYSELF: I can never imagine that some day I shall have expert knowledge of carpentry to supervise and regulate the work.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, get the Energy from above (the

¹ Effusive language.

Force) and put it forcefully on the carpenters. If one day you can do that, you will amply justify your timber throne.

MYSELF: In Yoga everything seems to be opposite. My Rs. 20,000 over my medical education is in vain ! I don't know what purpose will be served by making me a carpenter of the Divine. If on the contrary I could be the Son of a carpenter, that would be something !

SRI AUROBINDO: I was under the impression that you were not enthusiastic over medicine or at least over the practice of it. If we had known that you were anxious to justify the 20,000, we could have utilised you in that direction. Are you serious about it ?

12. 1. 35

MYSELF: It comes as a great surprise to hear that you consider enthusiasm for want of which you did not utilise my medical knowledge !

SRI AUROBINDO: I meant that as you had no enthusiasm for drugs, you might as well be living with timber.

MYSELF: I am really puzzled by your question, the more so because you have said that I am progressing more than I would have done if I were a literary or a medical gent.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, Mother had thought of you when we wanted somebody to fill up the hole left by the erratic X and we also don't know what we shall do when B goes for the domestic inspection of his affairs in Gujerat. We had rejected the idea because we thought you might not only be not enthusiastic but the reverse of enthusiastic about again being a medical gent. When however you spoke lovingly and hungrily about the Rs. 20,000, I rubbed my eyes and thought, "Well, well ! here is a chance !" That's all.

15. 1. 35

MYSELF: Is it true that women are more receptive and psychic than men ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! Neither more receptive nor even more hysteric. Men, I find, can equal them even at that. It is true that they declare hunger-strikes more easily, if you think with Gandhi that that is a sign of psychickness (soul-force). But after all Non-co-operation has taken away even that inferiority from men.

MYSELF: You wrote the other day that you had lived dangerously. All that we know is that you did not have enough money in England, — also in Pondicherry in the beginning. In Baroda you had a handsome pay, and in Calcutta you were quite well off.

SRI AUROBINDO: I was so astonished by this succinct, complete and impeccably accurate biography of myself that I let myself go in answer ! But I afterwards thought that it was no use living more dangerously than I am obliged to. So I rubbed all out. My only answer now is !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I thank you for the safe rich comfortable and unadventurous career you have given me. I note also that the only danger man can run in this world is that of the lack of money. Karl Marx himself could not have made a more economic world of it ! But I wonder whether that was what Nietzsche meant by living dangerously ?

16. 1. 35

MYSELF: Kindly let us know by some examples what you mean by “living dangerously”.

SRI AUROBINDO: I won't. It is altogether unnecessary besides. If you don't realise that starting and carrying on for ten years and more a revolutionary movement for independence in a country wholly unprepared for it is not

living dangerously, no amount of puncturing of your skull with words will give you that simple perception. And as to Yoga, you yourself were perorating at the top of your voice about its awful, horrible, pathetic and tragic dangers. So —

17. 1. 35

MYSELF: I beg to submit my apologies. I committed this folly because of ignorance of facts. Believe me, I did not know that you were the brain behind the revolutionary movement and its real leader till I read the other day what X had written about you. Now I really know what is meant by the phrase "living dangerously". Of course, I was not referring to anything about Yoga or the inner life. But why put me to shame by dragging my poor self into it? My dangers don't prove anything, do they?

SRI AUROBINDO: Wait a sec. I have admitted nothing about "X" — only to having conspired and started and maintained while I was in the field a movement for independence. That used at least to be a matter of public knowledge. I do not commit myself to more than that. My dear fellow, I was acquitted of sedition twice, and of conspiracy to wage war against the British Raj once and each time by expressibly British magistrates, judges or judge. Does not that prove conclusively my entire harmlessness and that I was a true Ahimsuk?

MYSELF: I've heard your poem on 'Tautology' to Dilip-da, and felt rather bad for your sake. So if you like, I can write only 3 days a week.

SRI AUROBINDO: The poem was not aimed at you — you need have no qualms of conscience.

MYSELF: Another thing — if you mind the way I have written the last few letters — the humorous vein — I shall stop it. But I may say that it was by some gracious movement of yours that I dared to do this and I have

really wondered how I dared !

SRI AUROBINDO: Not necessary to stop. Unless you are afraid of word-punctures in the skull. My indignations and objurgations are jocular and not meant to burn or bite.

19. 1. 35

MYSELF: A medical man writes that during the Middle Ages women had great freedom and a superior form of instruction, yet they did nothing outstanding. You will then agree that that is the consensus of opinion.

SRI AUROBINDO: The consensus of masculine opinion — perhaps.

MYSELF: Here I have noticed that out of sheer love some women have followed their husbands into the travails of the Unknown, but when the husbands have been assailed with doubts and depression, they have been sitting happily and confidently in the lap of the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO: Great Scott ! What a happy dream !

MYSELF: This letter of mine is pretty long. I am waiting to have from you a royal verdict covering and satisfying all the points.

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't cover and satisfy all points — it would need a volume. I had kept your book in order to write something less flippant and insufficient than the marginal notes about this grave matter. But I have had enough work today for any two Sundays, so I had to leave aside all that was not urgent.

The inferiority and superiority of women is not a subject that cannot wait, so — it waits.

21. 1. 35

MYSELF: Now that I am in charge of the Dispensary, I feel afraid about my prestige. People expect great things from an England-returned doctor (who, I may confide in you, hasn't had enough time for experience). If you

can't save my prestige, save at least my face.

SRI AUROBINDO: People are exceedingly silly — but I suppose they can't help themselves. The more I see of humanity, the more that forces itself on me. The abysses of silliness of which its mind is capable. The prestige I can't guarantee, but hope to save something of the face.

MYSELF: I have no desire to eat though I am hungry. I feel hungry at night, can't even sleep. Can it be due to the hypersecretion of the endocrines from yogic pressure?

SRI AUROBINDO: Confound your endocrines! You have got to eat. Yoga can't be done on a hungry stomach. Sleep also is indispensable.

22. 1. 35

MYSELF: Everybody seems to be happy to find me shifted from the "timber throne" to the Dispensary, and says, "Now is the right man in the right place!"

SRI AUROBINDO: Men are rational idiots. The timber godown made you make a great progress and you made the timber godown make a great progress too. I only hope it will be maintained by your successor.

MYSELF: But I do not know how long the right man will be right for them. They want me to entertain them with *pāyas* to celebrate the occasion.

SRI AUROBINDO: No man ever is the right one for them for a long time, but just the time of digesting the *pāyas*.

MYSELF: I feel a little attachment for that room I was in, with plenty of air and light.

SRI AUROBINDO: That was the reason for our hesitation to change you. But there is no go. The man in the right place must be in the place.

MYSELF: I consoled myself saying — however I am the neighbour of the Divine, under his breath, almost.¹

¹ My room was just opposite the house in which Sri Aurobindo lived.

So I am at least free from any number of hostile forces.

SRI AUROBINDO: Provided you allow the breath to come into you and don't blow it away.

23. 1. 35

MYSELF: Your resident physician-surgeon is not satisfied with being that alone, he is anxious to serve another Deity who is still behind. So he needs a bigger table which will be convenient and necessary, apart from the prestige !

SRI AUROBINDO: The bigger table is necessary for the prestige of the Deity and for the convenience (and necessity) of the physician-priest ?

26. 1. 35

MYSELF: Since ancient times women have been trained to accept a position of subjection by Manu and others. Is it because men are more sexual ? It would be rather hard on us to be accused of this !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is because of man's desire to be the master and keep her in subjection, — the Hitler and Mussolini attitude. The sex is an additional stimulus. No more hard than you deserve.

MYSELF: Now I have learnt a lot on the subject of women, but it has not been wholly satisfying, since the answers are in the nature of marginal comments. I would like to have a coherent, harmonious whole. My notebook can wait on your table till Monday.

SRI AUROBINDO: Sorry, but you can't get today either the volume or the harmonious whole. Woman will have to wait as she has done through the centuries and may have to do again if Hitler and Mussolini have their way. The men have crowded her out. Next time better not discuss her yourself — that will save me from the temptation of marginals. As for Monday — no, sir ! it is almost

as impracticable as the Saturdays.

30. 1. 35

MYSELF: Are women created only for the preservation of the species and the race ?

SRI AUROBINDO: *Much as doctors are ?* Only of course the doctor does not produce the species out of himself.

MYSELF: It is said that woman is man's guru and shakti. Sounds queer, doesn't it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No more queer than the husband being a god (husband-god, *pati-devatā*). The husband is supposed to be the wife's proper and only guru, so why should not the wife return that compliment and be the man's guru ? Tit for tat.

MYSELF: Is this shakti needed to make a man complete and whole ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Is man needed to make a woman complete and whole ?

MYSELF: How are we different from Buddha who, you say, was bound for Nirvana, so far as our relation with woman is concerned ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't understand. We are not going for Nirvana — at least I am not.

MYSELF: As for shakti, we can get any amount of it from above, can't we ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It doesn't look like it — most of the shakti is either not received or spilled. It does not follow that you should all go hunting for shaktis to complete you.

MYSELF: I haven't left any marginal space in my writing, because I want an exhaustive answer from you. The book can wait till Sunday, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: As you put no margin, I have put interstitials instead of marginals.

MYSELF: M has ringworm. It's a nasty business.

SRI AUROBINDO: Tell him all that and give him the

treatment. He is as sceptical about medical force as others are of the Divine species.

31. 1. 35

MYSELF: I am sending you a diagnosis of the ailment of my first patient. It is bad luck for me to have to tackle such a difficult case at the very outset of my medical work in the Ashram. But why do you have to spend so much Force, when you can do the whole job by a word? I mean, why not cut short our labour and the patient's discomfort by launching your তথাক্ত¹ from the higher Divine consciousness? I hope my patient gets cured soon by your Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a *test case*, I suppose! But why so strong on prestige? I should have thought everybody knows that doctors have to be guessing all the time and that cure is a matter of hit or miss. If you hit often you are a clever doctor — or if you kill people brilliantly, then also. It reduces itself to that.

I did not expect you to take my তথাক্ত with such grim seriousness. Speaking semi-seriously, I am not here to do miracles to order, but to try to get in a new consciousness somewhere in the world — which is itself however to attempt a miracle. If physical miracles happen to tumble in the process, well and good, but you can't present your medical pistol in my face and call on me to stand and deliver. As for the Force, application of my force, short of the supramental, means always a struggle of forces and the success depends (1) on the strength and persistency of the force put out (2) the receptivity of the subject (3) the sanction of the Unmentionable — I beg your pardon, I meant the Unnameable, Ineffable, Unknowable. X's physical consciousness is rather obstinate, as you have noticed, and therefore not too receptive. It may feel the Mother inside it, but to obey her will or force is less

¹ Let it be so.

habitual for it.

MYSELF: N's departure for his mother, my attachment for my mother, G's activities in Gujerat and B's departure in spite of his profound bhakti, set my brain whirling.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why on earth should such natural and inevitable things make your brain whirl ?

MYSELF: Mother, R says that you visit the Dispensary on the first of every month. Are you then coming tomorrow ?

SRI AUROBINDO: R is romancing or perhaps he is dreaming dreams in preparation of the millenium.

1. 2. 35

MYSELF: I still can't understand why you should bother to follow us doctors. The Divine can very easily act from the supramental consciousness directly; you don't really need a diagnosis given by ordinary men !

SRI AUROBINDO: If things were like that, why the devil should we have Doctors or a Dispensary at all ? And what would have been the use of your 20,000 ? We don't propose to do the whole business of the inside and outside off our own bat. You are as necessary for this as Chandulal for the building or others for their work.

Who told you that we are acting from supramental consciousness ? We are not and cannot until the confounded quarrel with Matter is settled.

2. 2. 35

MYSELF: Coming back to the cure you effected in D by your Force, X says that it might have been due to a combination of unseen factors — not due to your Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: How does he know ? Why can't my poor force be there among the invisibles, since invisibles there are ? If only visibles were admitted, then of course —

In that case all the trouble I took for D was sheer waste of energy, hallucination and chimera. Hallucination is also the fact that D's improvement agreed exactly with the thought I put out in the force? Well, it may be so. Modern science says there is no such thing as cause and effect, only conditions and statistics. But what are these unseen factors? (The Doctor at any rate thought it miraculous.) And what about the hundreds of cases of healing by suggestion or other mental forces everywhere?

MYSELF: I am still wondering why there should be doctors and a dispensary at all! Isn't it a paradox — the Divine sending his disciples to the human physician?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish! This is a world of the play of forces, sir, and the Doctor is a force. So why should not the Divine use him? Have you realised that if the Divine did everything, there would be no world, only a show of marionettes?

MYSELF: D also thinks the same as I do; why is it not possible for the Force to cure the patients? Let the Dispensary go to the devils!

SRI AUROBINDO: Thank you for your suggestions all the same — especially about the Dispensary and the devils. X almost sent it there, but it went to you instead.

MYSELF: Please don't mind the pungent remarks we make in our letters to you. We don't look upon you as a Bengali father but as an English one, who is a father and a friend.

SRI AUROBINDO: That you is who? I decline the *adhyāropa*¹ of an English or any father on me!

5. 2. 35

MYSELF: I am simply overjoyed to learn that one day your retirement can really come to an end. We had always a fear that you might never come out. Tagore ex-

¹ A role or a title superimposed on a person.

pressed this sentiment saying that the world has lost you. How can the world be changed without the personal presence of the Incarnate Divine ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You mean to say I am not personally present — I have gone off to the X-loka already ?

MYSELF: You refuse to be a Guru and decline to be a father, though ladies especially think of you as father and call you so. If they come to know of your refusal, I shall have to run with smelling salts from one lady to another !

SRI AUROBINDO: Father is too domestic and Semitic — Abba Father ! I feel as if I had suddenly become a twin brother of the Lord Jehovah. Besides, there are suggestions of a paternal smile and a hand uplifted to smite which do not suit me.

Let the ladies 'father' me if smelling salts are the only alternative, but let it not be generalised.

MYSELF: But what is the relation you won't decline ? Is it something besides the recognised ones in spiritual history ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know. I always prefer something new to the old labels. I will see the Supramental and perhaps find something.

MYSELF: They were saying that 'a sweet relation' has been established between you and me. I only hope and pray that it'll be sweeter and sweetest.

SRI AUROBINDO: The sweet relation is all right, but let it be nameless.

I have brought down a verse from heaven on the correspondence like Bahau'llah — which proves that if I am not an Avatar, at least I am a prophet. It is, I fear, full of *chhandapatan* and *bhāṣāpatan*,¹ but it expresses my feelings:

সাধকগণের হৃদিতলে correspondence করব বলে
যদি জাগত না পিপাসা,

¹ Faulty metre and defect in language.

ধাকডাম আমি হাসিমুখে মগ্ন Supramental স্বপ্নে

হায়রে হায় কোথায় সে আশা ?¹

But for heaven's sake don't show this undivine outbreak to anybody ! They will think I am trying to rival Dara² in his lighter poetic moods.

6. 2. 35

MYSELF: I am simply dying to show your divine verse to Dilipda. Your 'heaven's sake' I can't take seriously; you don't mean it either. Besides, I am no believer in Heaven. So you will excuse me. No one in our group will think Dara's influence is acting on you !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, under careful limitation and in all confidentiality you may risk the indiscretion.

MYSELF: After the lines, I am feeling a little guilty about my correspondence.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't mind your correspondence. It is a relief. But when people write four letters a day in small hand — running to some 10 pages without a gap anywhere and one gets 20 letters in the afternoon and forty at night (of course not all like that, but still !) it becomes a little too, too —

MYSELF: Though I feel guilty to take away so much of your precious time by my correspondence, I admit that you have reclaimed one believer by means of your correspondence. The thought of going away is becoming more and more remote. Perhaps, no consolation to you, for what do you care after all ? Men may come and men may go —

SRI AUROBINDO: But letters go on for ever !

Correspondence suspended till after the 21st and resumable only on notice. But under cover of your medical

¹ If the sadhaks had not in their hearts a craving for correspondence, I would have lived with a smiling face, merged in supramental bliss. Alas, alas, where is such a hope ?

² Dara: a former sadhak who used to write humorous verses.

cloak, you can carry on. Only mum about it ! Otherwise people might get jealous and give you a headache.

7. 2. 35

MYSELF: After the 'preface' is any chapter likely to follow, or is it going to be like so many other prefaces — nothing coming after them ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps in some weeks or some months or some centuries the chapter may follow ! But I used the word preface to characterise the nature of what I had written, not in a prophetic sense.

10. 2. 35

MYSELF: Excuse my writing today ! Since all days are Sundays for you, it is all right, I suppose.

SRI AUROBINDO: The whole Ashram seems to reason in the same way and to draw the farther consequence that the perpetual Sunday is the proper day for each writing his special letter to me ! What a touching proof of unanimity and solidarity in the communal mind !

MYSELF: To continue our argument on the Avatar issue — You say that since 'these things' have been possible in you, they are possible in the earth-consciousness. Quite true; but have they been done ? Has any sweeper or street beggar been changed into a Buddha or a Chaitanya by the Divine ? We see in the whole history of spirituality only one Christ, one Buddha, one Krishna, one Sri Aurobindo and one Mother. Has there been any breaking of this rule ? Since it has not been done, it can't be done.

SRI AUROBINDO: What a wonderful argument ! Since it has not been done, it can't be done ! At that rate the whole history of the earth must have stopped long before the protoplasm. When it was a mass of gases, no life had been born, *ergo*, life could not be born — when

only life was there, mind was not born, so mind could not be born. Since mind is there but nothing beyond, as there is no Supermind manifested in anybody, so Supermind can never be born. *Shobhanallah* ! Glory, Glory, Glory to the human reason ! Luckily the Divine or the Cosmic Spirit or Nature or whoever is there cares a damn for the human reason. He or She or It does what He or She or It has to do, whether it can or cannot be done.

MYSELF: Kindly excuse the impudence of the next question; it has been hovering at the back of my mind for some time. Can a Muthu¹ or a sadhak be ever a Sri Aurobindo, even if he is supramentalised ? I say that it is absolutely impossible !

SRI AUROBINDO: What need has he to be a Sri Aurobindo ? He can be a supramentalised Muthu !

MYSELF: If somebody comes and says, "Why is it not possible to be a Sri Aurobindo ?" I would answer, "Better rub some *Madhyam Narayan* oil on your head !" (*Madhyam Narayan* oil is used for insanity, by the way.)

SRI AUROBINDO: I have no objection to that. Plenty of the middle *Narayan* is needed in this Ashram. This part of your argument is perfectly correct — but it is also perfectly irrelevant.

MYSELF: I would not mind your fury in revenge if only you would crush me with a convincing assault. I hope to close the chapter on 'Divine Omnipotence' with this last letter, but you keep me hoping with that promise of yours to write at length some day —

SRI AUROBINDO: "Peace, peace, O fiery furious spirit — Calm thyself and be at rest." Your fury or furiousness is wasted because your point is perfectly irrelevant to the central question on which all this breath (or rather ink) is being spent. Muthu and the sadhaks who want to equal or distance or replace the Mother and myself and so need very badly Middle *Narayan* oil — there have been

¹ An Ashram servant.

several — have appeared only as meaningless foam and froth on the excited crest of the dispute. I fear you have not grasped the internalities and modalities and caudalities of my high and subtle reasoning. It is not surprising as you are down down in the troughs of the rigidly logically illogical human reason while I am floating in the heights and the infinite plasticities of the Overmind and the lightning-like subtleties and swiftnesses of the Intuition. There ! What do you think of that ? However ! !

More seriously, I have not stated that any Muthu has equalled Ramakrishna and I quite admit that Muthu here in *ipse persona* has no chance of performing that feat. I have not said that anyone here can be Sri Aurobindo or the Mother — I have pointed out what I meant when I objected to your explaining away my sadhana as a perfectly useless piece of Avatarean fireworks. So in my comment on the Muthu logic I simply pointed out that it was bad logic — that some one quite ignorant and low in the social scale can manifest a great spirituality and a great spiritual knowledge. I hope you are not bourgeois enough to deny that or to contend that the Divine or the spiritual can only manifest in somebody who has some money in his pocket and some University education in his pate !About greater and less, one point. Is Captain John Higgins of S. S. Mauretania a greater man than Christopher Columbus because he can reach America without trouble in a few days ? Is a University graduate in philosophy greater than Plato because he can reason about problems and systems which had never occurred to Plato ?... Can you tell me which is the greater ? The Avatar recognised by all India ? or the saint and Yogi recognised as an Avatar only by his disciples and some others who follow them ?

11. 2. 35

MYSELF: I am a little taken aback to hear that a 'cer-

tain note of persiflage' dilutes the grave discussion I am having with you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Look here, don't tell me that because you are a doctor, therefore you can't understand a joke. It would have the effect of making me dreadfully serious.

MYSELF: I am sorry I can't detect the adulteration of the Divine philosophy with the persiflage. My medical appliance is hardly capable of doing it.

SRI AUROBINDO: A sense of humour (not grim) ought to be a sufficient appliance.

MYSELF: No doubt, I enjoy heartily the humour but I should like to be able to suck up the cream and give the rest its proper place.

SRI AUROBINDO: The cream = the persiflage — the rest is the solemn part of the argument.

MYSELF: I would like to know something about my "bad logic" before I write anything further to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Helps to finding out your bad logic. I give instances expressed or implied in your reasonings.

Bad logic No. 1. Because things have not been, therefore they can never be.

No. 2. Because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, his sadhana can have no meaning for humanity.

No. 3. What happens in Sri Aurobindo's sadhana cannot happen in anybody else's sadhana (i.e. neither descent nor realisation, nor transformation, nor intuitions, nor budding of new powers or faculties) — because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar and the sadhaks are not.

No. 4. A street beggar cannot have any spirituality or at least not so much as, let us say, a University graduate — because well, one doesn't know why the hell not.

No. 5. (and last because of want of space). Because I am a doctor I can't see a joke when it is there.

12. 2. 35

MYSELF: But how terrifying is your 'Look here' ! What

I have heard of your extreme seriousness in former days, is quite enough not to invite it farther on my poor head !

SRI AUROBINDO: Bad logic again ! When I write "Look here !" it means I am not serious, however terrifying I may be.

MYSELF: Only I find that you have beaten me right and left for what I did not even intend to say.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course ! One is most responsible for what one does not intend. It is besides, the nature of bad logic to imply what the logician did not mean or did not know what he meant. Ignorance is no defence in law and non-intention is no defence in logic. Such is the beauty of life !

13. 2. 35

MYSELF: If I say that a Tom, Dick or Harry cannot be a Rama, Krishna or Sri Aurobindo, what reply will you give ?

SRI AUROBINDO: They may not be Rama or Krishna or Sri Aurobindo but they may become spiritualised super-Tom, super-Dick, super-Harry.

MYSELF: I should say that the Avatars are like well-fitted, well-equipped Rolls Royce machines; they do have plenty of difficulties in their journey but just because they are like Rolls Royce they can surmount them — whilst the rest of humanity is like either loose and disjointed machines or wagons to be dragged along by the Avatars and great spiritual personages. Floating on the heights of the Overmind, you have overlooked what this earth-bound clod crawling over low plateaus has meant !

SRI AUROBINDO: All sufficient to themselves — perfect and complete from the beginning, hey ? Just roll, royce and ripple. Great Scott ! What a penal servitude for the great personages and the Avatars ! And where are they leading them ? All that rubbish into Paradise ? How is that any more possible than creating a capacity where

there is none ? If the disjointed machines cannot be jointed, isn't it more economical to leave them where they are in the lumber-shed ?

MYSELF: I reiterate the whole problem because you have put into my mouth what I have not mentioned !

SRI AUROBINDO: You may not have mentioned it but it was implied in your logic without your knowing that it was implied. Logic has its own consequences which are not apparent to the logician. It is like a move in chess by which you intend to overcome the opponent but it leads, logically, to consequences which you didn't intend and ends in your own checkmate. You can't invalidate the consequences by saying that you didn't intend them... — the question is whether as a general rule rigid and unalterable man is bound down to his outward nature as it appears to be built at the moment and even the Divine cannot or will not under any circumstances change it or develop something new in it, something not yet "evident", not yet manifested, or is there a chance for human beings becoming more like the Divine ? If not, there is no use in anybody doing this Yoga; let the Krishnas and Ramakrishnas rocket about gloriously and uselessly in the empty Inane and the rest wriggle about for ever in the clutch of the eternal Devil. For that is the logical conclusion of the whole matter.

14. 2. 35

MYSELF: It seems that before I could come out of the pit of 'latency', the Avatar-pyramid has fallen on my head, sending me down to the bottom again ! But I am afraid, you are making me admit something I never wrote, nor implied in what I wrote.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can you not understand that it was the natural logical result of the statements made on either side about the unbridgeable distance between "Man Divine" and the human being moving in the darkness to-

wards the Divine? If you admit the utility of my sadhana the controversy ceases. But so long as you declare that what I have done in my sadhana has no connection with what can be done, I shall go on beating you.... For the rest I propose that all discussion be postponed till after the 21st (not immediately after). This will give time for you to clear your ideas and for me to pursue my "Avataric" sadhana (not for myself, but for this confounded and too confounded earth race).

15. 2. 35

MYSELF: Considerably subdued after the beating I received, I am beginning to understand what you say about omnipotence, the conditions of the game that have to be observed, latency, etc. This letter is not to dispute any of the things you have stated but just to express that I am boiling inside with impotent rage to see how you have "unfairly" cornered me with the very arguments I was maintaining all the while. Alas! my pen derives its power only from terrestrial planes!

SRI AUROBINDO: You were the reporter of the discussion; so naturally you had to be the whipping boy for all sides. You can't complain of that. There must be somebody to tilt at — otherwise how the deuce is the argument to be done?

MYSELF: I have, however, jotted down a few points for you to see. I never said that only moral capacities can be latent, and not mental.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, but it was implied in the argument to which you gave voice. It may not have been your argument, but what does it matter?

MYSELF: ...You can cut me, Sir, or beat me, but don't forsake me — in imitation of the librarian of my College who came out with a similar appeal when the professor of English caught him smoking one day!

SRI AUROBINDO: Never! But beat — a lot.

MYSELF: I repeat a little pathetically, that my brain is sclerotic and the psychic smoky; no intellect and no Yogic capacity, as you yourself must have realised by now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, to see that they are non-evident shows you at once that they are latent and will be evident and even if they are not latent they are waiting for you in the universal. So in every blessed way you are very quite all right. Be consoled therefore.

MYSELF: It is rather a long letter, because it is a closing one. When will these two weeks be over! Give me a little extra force for doing something, just to keep me out of mischief — an idle brain is the devil's workshop. Who knows what I'll be up to!

SRI AUROBINDO: Man, don't talk lightly like that of the devil. He is too active to be trifled with in that way. My devils? They are only expletive.

MYSELF: By the way, Mother, no chance for me to see you tomorrow — the anniversary of my arrival?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother has 2 birthdays (not her own, of course) and an interview tomorrow morning. I am afraid your train can pass only when the line is clear.

23. 2. 35

MYSELF: I am unhappy and I don't know why. To put it medically, there is some hidden focus of infection, dissemination slow and mild but constant toxins of unhappiness in the system.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well but hang it all! If there is no "why", then "why" be "unhappy"?

Is it in the system or in the air? Endemic? epidemic? You seem to be only one of many cases.

MYSELF: I felt an immense joy at the Darshan on February 21st, but it ebbed away as soon as I came down.

SRI AUROBINDO: It sounds like *facilis descensus Averi-*

no.¹ But after all downstairs and Erebus are not the same thing.

MYSELF: There are some Yogis, I hear, who are in bliss during meditation, but when they come down they are swallowed up in the lower nature, and to escape from this they at once leap up to their static sublimity. Unfortunately I can't rush up again till August 15th — the next Darshan ! Will you kindly come down and help the poor amateur Yogi ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Come down ? into Erebus ? No, thank you — I might become like the said Yogis.

MYSELF: But what is all this ? We count minutes and hours for the Darshans and when they come and go, what kind of reaction do they leave in the being ? and why ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It must be like your unhappiness — no why to it.

MYSELF: At present I am only sleeping and sleeping, no aspiration, no will, nothing — *shunyam*, void ! Have I set the devil on my track by my boasting ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Which boasting ?

But why hug despair without a cause — Dilipian or other ? Come to your senses and develop a Nirodian jollity instead (not necessarily Mark Tapleyan though that is better than none). Laugh and be fat — then dance to keep the fat down — that is a sounder programme.

MYSELF: The Overmind seems so distant from us, and your Himalayan austerity and grandeur takes my breath away, making my heart palpitate !

SRI AUROBINDO: O rubbish ! I am austere and grand, grim and stern ! every blasted thing I never was ! I groan in an un-Aurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all of you people ? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality. Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the

¹ Easy the descent to Hell.

least commonsense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation — not imagining wild imaginations — or for that matter despairing “I know not why” despairs.

25. 2. 35

MYSELF: Your grandeur and austerity imposed themselves not on this commonsense-lacking poor man alone, but on others too. I will say then that common sense is highly uncommon like the yogic faculties ! However !

SRI AUROBINDO: Common sense is exceedingly uncommon in this Ashram. Sometimes I think the Mother and myself alone have our stock left unexhausted and all the rest have sent theirs flying sky-high. However !

26. 2. 35

MYSELF: The patient V started taking 5-6 castor oil seeds a day. The number rapidly rose to 26-30 divided among three meals. It is amazing he had no bad symptoms except a slight oily sensation in the throat at first. Immunity ? Tolerance by the system ? Or another Khagananda in the Ashram ?

SRI AUROBINDO: He must have immunised himself — a modern Mithridates ! Of course the yogis do this kind of thing and it is perfectly possible. But I did not realise that V was one of the great ones. He has however in these matters the faith and audacity that moves mountains. Also his intestines must be very leathery and tough.

Who is Khagananda ? There was the public poison-snakes eater who died because once he forgot to do the antidotic *kriyā*¹ after his poison meal. But that was, I think, another Ananda.

MYSELF: The more we are seeing the more that pessimistic attitude comes over me and the likes of us you

¹ Yogic measures.

want to supramentalise ! But the Book of Verses says, "The meaner the slave, the greater the Lord".

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this more that you are seeing ?

28. 2. 35

MYSELF: By the way, people get poems, pictures in meditation and I seem to get only letters and points for letters ! Since letters and discussions are interdicted I have been obliged to draw inspiration from sleep. And I find that sleeping has a decided advantage in this Yoga !

SRI AUROBINDO: You get letters in meditation ! that would be fine — it would save me the trouble of writing them, simply project into your meditation instead of sending through Nolini ! No objection to sleep — the land of Nod has also its treasures.

1. 3. 35

MYSELF: I am thinking of doing some studies in English language, not for any creative purpose, but for recreation.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right.

MYSELF: With this aim in view, I want to take up your immortal philosophy — though my walnut of a brain can't do much with it — and if you will allow, have some discussions with you, at intervals.

SRI AUROBINDO: Provided the discussions can be put in a "walnut" shell !

MYSELF: I hear you are having a tough fight with the forces ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very beastly — these forces. One can't advance a single step without their throwing shells and stink-bombs. However like General Jeffre, I advance. "Nous progressâmes."

MYSELF: If we busy ourselves with something like the

study of the English language, as I have stated, it may indirectly help to keep the devil off.

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope so. There is much need of keeping him off and if the English language can do it, glory be to the English language !

2. 3. 35

MYSELF: You thrashed me for calling you grave and austere at the Darshan time. But see, when we go to the Mother, how seraphically she smiles, while your Self being near, appears still far away at some Olympian height. It is difficult to discern the gravity or the jollity of a face at such a height. But I suppose our conception of the gods was formed from the vision of such a figure.

SRI AUROBINDO: Neither gravity nor jollity, but a large, easy, quiet, amiable condition. The gods can't be amiable ?

MYSELF: Our conclusions about your austerity and gravity are not altogether wrong when we put it side by side with the Mother's clear smile showing her feeling and attitude.

SRI AUROBINDO: Look here, what are you saying ? The Mother's feeling and attitude are being constantly questioned by the sadhaks, "You didn't smile ! You were severe ! You are displeased with me ! You don't love me ! What wrong have I done ? etc., etc." much to the Mother's astonishment, as she has no consciousness of such things in her !

MYSELF: Smiles may be nothing to some, but if you look at it a little sympathetically and humanly, you will give it its proper importance. Considering the fact that one has left behind all joys and pleasures of life and come to a desert — at least at the primary stage — you can't ask us to be above all expectations of touches of soft breezes, can you ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The poet says or ought to have said,

"It is the mind that makes its hell or heaven." The proof is that some people find it for a long time not desert, but as they call it a Paradise. Of course it is neither, — it is what one makes of it.

MYSELF: I am thinking of taking some milk-tea and butter in the morning. Will it be a move to the left? If so, I give it up at once.

SRI AUROBINDO: Butter in milk-tea? Never heard of such a meal before! Is it symbolic of the Supramental?

4. 3. 35

MYSELF: Last night I had a peculiar dream. I saw Mother in a half-reclining position, writing something playfully on my forehead, with her finger and you entreated her smilingly to write more. Now, what is this? Result of my groaning complaint? Effectuation in dream-land what couldn't be in the world of fact and reality?

SRI AUROBINDO: The place where you were is as much a world of fact and reality as is the material world and its happenings have sometimes a great effect on this world. What an ignorant lot of disciples you all are! Too much modernisation and Europeanisation by half!

...The writing on the forehead means of course something that is fixed in you in the vital plane and has to come out hereafter in the physical consciousness.

MYSELF: By milk-tea and butter I meant a greater quantity of milk with a little tea, bread and butter. Well, the idea is to fill up the clavicular and other hollows in the body. Laughing alone can't make one fat! And without a little fat, it is said one hardly looks like a doctor!

SRI AUROBINDO: Fat = medical knowledge? or a doctor thinks with his fat and not with his brain? But the self-buttering is your affair — I have no idea one way or the other in the matter.

5. 3. 35

MYSELF: You discover too late, Sir ! No escape now but to drag us, the ignorant fools and it is for this very reason I was protesting that fools can't do what Avatars can. However !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, they can if they stop being fools. However !!!

MYSELF: What is this "something fixed in the vital" ? If anything impure is to happen, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Besides, I am not afraid of anything since that memorable "never" of yours.

SRI AUROBINDO: Great Muggins, man ! What a mess you have made of my explanation ! I meant that by writing on your forehead the Mother had fixed something in you on the vital plane. That something, which she has fixed, will in time come out, manifest, be produced, born, fulfilled in this (slightly obtuse) physical consciousness of yours on this material plane. Produce itself out of latency like the sainthood in Muthu — see ? Why on earth should the Mother write something impure on your forehead ? Something good of course — something meaning to be there — something of your spiritual future, realisation kind of affair — what ? If you echo me and ask "what ? what ?" I can't tell you — No data in the dream and as a conscientious scientific person I refuse to interpret without data.

6. 3. 35

MYSELF: I hasten to write this letter so that you may revise your opinion about my logic. Please write an exhaustive reply, but in ink.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nirod, on the back the rational and logical result of your arguments. I shall write certain irrational answers on your MS. — in ink.

You have won all along the line; who could resist such a lava-torrent of logic? Slightly mixed but still! You have convinced me (1) that there never was nor could be an Avatar, (2) that all the so-called Avatars were chimerical fools and failures, (3) that there is no Divinity or divine element in man, (4) that I have never had any true difficulties or struggles, and that if I had any it was all my fun (as K. S. said of my new metres that they were only Mr. Ghose's fun), (5) that if ever there was or will be a real Avatar, I am not he — but that I knew before, (6) that all I have done or the Mother has done is mere sham — sufferings, struggles, conquests, defeats, the Way found, the Way followed, the call to others to follow, everything — it was all make-believe since I was the Divine and nothing could touch me and none follow me. That is truly a discovery, a downright knock-out which leaves me convinced, convicted, amazed, gasping. I won't go on, there is no space; but there are a score of other luminous convictions that your logic has forced on me. But what to do next? You have put me in a terrible fix and I see no way out of it. For if the Way, the Yoga is merely sham, fun and chimera — then?

7. 3. 35

MYSELF: You seem to attribute to me things which I never said, or is it my clumsy way of putting things? Probably that. But even then, you have put into my mouth exactly the opposite of what I have been trying to say. For instance — when did I say that you are not an Avatar? On the contrary I wrote to you that you *are* an Avatar.

SRI AUROBINDO: You don't say, but if your theory or description of an Avatar is right, I am not one. I am proceeding on the necessary consequences of your logic.

You make a flourish of reasonings and do not see the

consequence of your reasonings. It is no use saying, "I believe this or that" and then reasoning in a way which leads logically to the very negation of what you believe.

MYSELF: I never said that there could be no Avatars nor that they are failures.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! you said most emphatically that they were all failures and that is why the Divine had to come back again and again "to atone for his failures."

MYSELF: Regarding the divinity in man — what is the use of this divinity if it is coated layer after layer with Maya ? How many can really become conscious of it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly ! Why admit any divinity then at all, if humanity is an insuperable bar to any following in the way pointed out by the Avatar ? That was your contention that humanity and divinity are unbridgeable opposite things, that it is no use the Avatar asking others (except Arjuna) to follow in his Path — they being human cannot do it.

Let me make it clear that in all I wrote I was not writing to prove that I am an Avatar !

8. 3. 35

MYSELF: I await your 'irrational' remarks on my type-script. I hope you haven't thrown it into the waste paper basket ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I had written a good deal the same day as I got your type-script, but I have a sanguinary eye, so I have to wait a day or two before pursuing my irrationalities.

9. 3. 35

MYSELF: I am surprised and sad to hear that you can still be affected by these physical ailments !

SRI AUROBINDO: What I am surprised at is that I have any energy left at all after the last two or three years of

half-day and all night work. The difficulty for resting is that the sadhaks have begun pouring paper again without waiting for the withdrawal of the notice — not all of course, but many. And there is a stack of outside correspondence still unanswered. I am persuading my eye, but it is still red and sulky and reproachful. Revolted, what? Thinks too much is imposed on it and no attention paid to its needs, desires, preferences etc. Will have to reason with it for a day or two longer.

MYSELF: How I wish, as a medical man, I mean, I could enforce *absolute rest* to the eyes and issue a bulletin.

SRI AUROBINDO [underlined 'absolute rest']: It does not exist in this world — not even in the Himalayas — except of course for the inner being which can always be in absolute rest.

17. 3. 35

MYSELF: And why so many illnesses all on a sudden? Is the Supramental then too near?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it is the material which has become too uppish.

MYSELF: People are saying that it has come down into the physical, evidenced by great peace and calm. Is this then that calm and peace or the deluge before the new creation?

SRI AUROBINDO: Into whose physical? I shall be very glad to know, for I myself have not got so far, otherwise I would not have a queazy eye. But if you know anybody who has got it (the Supramental in the physical, not the eye) tell me like a shot. I will acclaim him "Grand First Supramental" at once.

MYSELF: And so many eye cases too! Is the infection spreading from the Master to the disciples?

SRI AUROBINDO: There were plenty of eye cases before. Your idea of their sudden multitude is an optical illusion.

MYSELF: Please see that my type-script with your remarks is not misplaced. I am almost dreading it. If once it goes into the heap, it is gone for ever !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is safe. I have a stylish 17th century (or something like that) portfolio for these thrice precious (?) documents now.

MYSELF: Dr. B is going tonight and the whole responsibility of the Dispensary sits on my shoulders. Well, all faults and failings have to be borne alone. You may say the Divine is there behind. Yes, but that 'behind' makes all the difference ! One doesn't know whether He is there ! And I don't know why He proposes to work in me from behind or within !

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know, "God moves in a mysterious way" — that is the sum of human wisdom in the matter, but it doesn't carry you very far.

19. 3. 35

MYSELF: M's is not a pimple. It looks like a Meibomian cyst.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the hell is that ? I don't know bad Greek.

20. 3. 35

MYSELF: I send you a diagram of M's condition, drawn by Nishikanta. It is an enlargement of one of the glands in the inner coat of the eye-lid. I hope the "hell" is clear now !

SRI AUROBINDO: This is more intelligible. You haven't explained your bad Greek, though — meibomian which seems to have something to do with a mystically silent shout.

MYSELF: My system has been rather supersaturated with medicines and reports. If you could release that type-script document without any inconvenience to your eye,

I can recharge the battery.

SRI AUROBINDO: Release ? I am seeking for *mukti* myself.

21. 3. 35

MYSELF: An inner unquiet is running for some days. Everything is gasping — meditation, concentration, aspiration. The Mother's writing on the forehead doesn't seem to manifest either ! And what about the Universal, not a sign of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Stop gasping and smile a little.

Well, it is around you, it is bound to manifest. You have only to keep quiet and open yourself pleasantly.

MYSELF: You are seeking for Mukti !! I thought you never cared for it.

SRI AUROBINDO: That mukti I got ages ago without my wanting it.

MYSELF: The ophthalmologist said that M's eye-condition has improved. He has advised to give salicylates for past rheumatism.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right — salicylate him as much as the Ost. likes. Queer ! One has to be dosed not only for present and future but past ailments. Medicine like the Brahman transcends Time.

23. 3. 35

MYSELF: Suchi is showing signs of cerebral irritation. It is strange that I didn't think of the head injury neither did you draw my attention to it.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Mother got the suggestion several times, but she did not feel entitled to interfere as she is "not a doctor", and the suggestion was not scientific or rational, but only an "unbased" intuition. The rights of reason and science, you know, are not to be trifled with ! Hail Reason, holy Light ! etc....

MYSELF: Mother, thinking of this case and one or two others, I feel ashamed of my poor knowledge and experience. I was wondering how I would show my face to you at Pranam.

SRI AUROBINDO: Cheer up. As Danton said, "De l'audace et toujours de l'audace."¹ (What is lacking in you is the doctor's confidence in guessing at a disease and throwing a medicine at it in the hope that it will strike and cure. But that is not what I mean by the quotation.)

MYSELF: I had dreamt that you had come to me for eye treatment. Does it mean that you are still unwell? Mridu says that you walk about with a bandage on your eyes!

SRI AUROBINDO: The eyes are still unready for overstrain, that is all. I suppose they have erected an automatic self-defence against the Call of correspondence.

If you believe all that Mridu's highly wrought poetic imagination conceives!!

26. 3. 35

MYSELF: In one of your talks in the early days you seem to have acclaimed yourself as immortal except under three conditions — accident, poison and Ichchha-Mrityu.²

SRI AUROBINDO: It must have been a 'joke taken as a self-acclamation. Or perhaps what I said was that I have the power to overcome illness, but accident and poison and the I. M. still remain as possible means of death....

MYSELF: And just lately I came to know that the first two also have been conquered and the last, Ichchha-Mrityu depends on your Ichchha.

SRI AUROBINDO: Great heavens, when?

MYSELF: Do you really mean to say that the Supra-

¹ Audacity and always audacity.

² Death at will.

mental will make a tottering old man an immortal being ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, don't you know that old men sometimes get a new or third set of teeth in their old age ? And if monkey glands can renew functionings and forces and even make hair grow on a bald head, as Voronoff has proved by living examples, well ? And mark that Science is only at the beginning of these experiments. If these possibilities are opening before Science, why should one declare their absolute impossibility by other means ?

MYSELF: I propose to go to the Hospital 3 or 4 days a week, because I think it will help my work. But please don't say later on that I was following closely my predecessor in trying to be a big doctor.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother fully approves your attending. She considers it helpful in many ways. So have no scruples Esculapean or otherwise.

27. 3. 35

MYSELF: Whatever you have said in joke or in earnest, it logically follows that you are immortal. Because if you say that Supramental can alone conquer death, one who has become that is evidently and consequently immortal. So if one is immortal or has conquered death, no poison or accident can affect him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Your syllogism is "One who became supramental, can conquer death

Sri Aurobindo has become supramental

Sri Aurobindo has conquered death."

1st premiss right; second premiss premature; conclusion at least premature and in any case excessive, for "can conquer" is turned into "has conquered" = is immortal. It is not easy, my dear doctor, to be a logician; the human reasoning animal is always making slight inaccuracies like that in his syllogisms which vitiate the whole reasoning. This might be correct

"One who becomes wholly supramental conquers death

Sri Aurobindo is becoming supramental

Sri Aurobindo is conquering death."

But between "is conquering" and "has conquered" is a big difference. It is the difference between present and future, logical possibility and logical certitude.

MYSELF: Because you are still subject to eye and throat trouble, would it mean that you haven't yourself conquered death? If that be so, am I to accept that the Supramental hasn't driven its roots into you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Besides, I said "has driven its roots into Matter." Am I "Matter"?

MYSELF: Though you say that death is possible because illness hasn't been conquered, I take it as a principle. Amal and I firmly believe that those whom you have *accepted*, are absolutely immune to death.

SRI AUROBINDO [underlined twice the word "accepted"]: Too comfortable a doctrine. It brings in a very tamasic syllogism! I am accepted by Sri Aurobindo. I am sure of supramentality and immune from death. Therefore I need not do a damned thing. Supramentality will of itself grow in me and I am already immortal, so I have all time and eternity before me for it to happen — "of itself". Like that, does it sound true?

29. 3. 35

MYSELF: You will excuse my fear, about T's hysterics. But surely if *one* can be the cause of such a trouble and upset somebody — and a lady at that, and in the Ashram, in addition to the fact that *one* has plenty of these to bear in oneself, I don't know really what could be done. You know, so I leave it to you to be excused.

SRI AUROBINDO: Fear of what? [Underlining 'one'] Who is the one? in either case — A, you or X in general or in particular?

This is very mysterious language; can't you be more explicit?

MYSELF: My logic again, Sir: Sri Aurobindo is bound to be wholly supramental and is being supramentalised in parts. If that is true — and it is — well, he can't die till he is supramental — and once he is so he is immortal.

SRI AUROBINDO: It looks very much like a *non sequitur*. The first part and the last are all right — but the link is fragile. How do you know I won't take a fancy to die in between as a joke?

MYSELF: Now if that is accepted then those whom you know for certain as would-be-supramentals and have been accepted as such, are immortal — follows as a corollary.

SRI AUROBINDO: Again the fallacy comes in on the "would be". A "supramental" may be immortal but why should a W. S. be immortal?

MYSELF: It may be a 'comfortable doctrine' but that is my philosophy of sadhana. What is the use of an Avatar if we do everything by ourselves? We have come to you and taken shelter at your feet so that you may, as the Gita says, deliver us from all sins.

SRI AUROBINDO: But what if the Avatar gets frightened at the prospect of all this hard labour and rushes back scared behind the veil?

MYSELF: After all what's the use of so much austere sadhana? The Supramental is bound to come down and we shall lie flat at the gate and *he can't pass us off*.

SRI AUROBINDO [underlined 'can't pass us off']: Why not? Why can't he float easily over you and leave you lying down or send for the supramental police to chivy you out and make you pass through a hard examination in an Epicurean austerity before you are allowed inside?

MYSELF: This is not really a joke. You may beat me for my semi-epicurean attitude, but I do believe that those who can stick to the last from A to N, will have the

supramental realisation.

SRI AUROBINDO: N also !!! Great illogical heavens ! Obviously if N becomes a supramental, everybody can ! No doubt about that logic.

MYSELF: You may say that it will be delayed in its descent by our passivistic attitude, as some people say that yourself and the Mother would have been supramentalised long ago if only we had not kept you down. Is it really true ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't say there is no truth in it, but it is not the passivistic attitude that stood in the way. However, "ifs" come to nothing so far as the past is concerned, since the past having been had to be. "Ifs" come only of value for the future.

MYSELF: Manubhai (in the smithy) has conjunctivitis.

SRI AUROBINDO: Manibhai is the Smithy Superintendent — Manubhai is the Lord High Gardener. Don't mix men and vowels supramentally like that.

31. 3. 35

MYSELF: Can you tell me why so many cases have flared up along with my advent ? Are the hostile forces trying to test the capacity of a raw doctor ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have noticed that, but I am not yet quite clear as to the cause — whether it is a special favour to you or merely a coincidence i.e. you just balled in when these things were due.

MYSELF: By the way, none of those perverse 'fancies' please. If at all you think of going, let us know beforehand, so that we may disappear before you !

SRI AUROBINDO: Where would be the fun if I told you beforehand ? However, I have no bad intentions for the moment.

1. 4. 35

MYSELF: Whatever little benefit I derive from the hos-

pital attendance, is counteracted by vital itches uprising in that atmosphere. Old nature ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Put some psychological pommade on them.

Kick it out.

MYSELF: When one hears that you had to plod through a lot, one wonders whether the story of Valmiki's sudden opening of poetic faculties is true — whether such a miracle is really possible.

SRI AUROBINDO: Plod about what ? For some things I had to plod — other things came in a moment or in two or three days like Nirvana or the power to appreciate painting. The "latent" philosopher failed to come out at the first shot (when I was in Calcutta) — after some years of incubation (?) it burst out like a volcano as soon as I started writing the "Arya". There is no damned single rule for these things. Valmiki's poetic faculty might open suddenly like a champagne bottle, but it does not follow that everybody's will do like that.

3. 4. 35

MYSELF: Tomorrow, we hear, is the anniversary of your arrival day. Give some blessings, please.

SRI AUROBINDO: Plenty of them.

4. 4. 35

MYSELF: But even if you have no medico in you, it is high time that something opens up in you ! Don't you see how so many difficult cases are rising, the nearer the Supramental is descending, if it is descending at all ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let it open up in you then. Don't you see how all these things are coming just to make you bloom into a Dhanwantari¹ overnight ?

MYSELF: For me to supramentalise and then know de

¹ A famous legendary Indian doctor.

finitely physical things is a 'long, long way to Tipperary.'

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not get it like my painting vision ?

MYSELF: We had a feast at J's, to celebrate the occasion of your arrival here. I thought of doing it in the Dispensary, but felt the smell would disturb you. So I thought it is better to sacrifice K — by disturbing him than sacrificing the Supramental !

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, the Dispensary is out of the question for such things. But when the Vedic or other ancient people made a बलि,¹ they took care that the victim should not kick about or make a row. You did not take that precaution with K.

8. 4. 35

MYSELF: I want to love and love completely and lose myself in love. If one can think of losing oneself for mortal love why not for the love of the Divine ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, why not ? But it must be done in the divine way, not in the mortal. Otherwise —

MYSELF: Let me then say definitely that I love you and you love me a little. And let us meet somewhere in this real matter. You may remark, 'This man has gone mad otherwise why all these asthmatic gaspings ?' Yes, I am mad, Sir, and impatient too.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ummm ! don't you think there are enough people in that condition already here without the Ashram doctor adding himself to the collection ?

9. 4. 35

MYSELF: The Divine writing, not the Divine Love, has made me a little peaceful. But the way you are hammering the 'Supramental' on us in everything, one would almost think that its descent will make all of us 'big people' overnight.

¹ Sacrifice.

SRI AUROBINDO: My insistence on the Supramental is of course apodiaskeptic. Don't search for the word in the dictionary. I am simply imitating the doctors who when they are in a hole protect themselves with impossible Greek. Peace supramental, if possible, but peace anyhow — a peace which will become supramental if it has a chance. The atmosphere is most confoundedly disturbed, that is why I am ingeminating "peace, peace, peace!" like a summer dove or an intellectual under the rule of Hitler. Of course, I am not asking you to become supramental off-hand. That is my business, and I will do it if you fellows give me a chance, which you are not doing just now (you is not personal, but collective and indefinite) and will do less if you go blumming into buzzi-fic intensities. (Please *don't* consult the dictionary, but look into the writings of Joyce and others).

MYSELF: You say that peace is absolutely necessary for bringing down Love, Knowledge, etc., but don't you think purity is also required? And if peace and purity are to be established, a complete opening of the inner being is essential, and the bringing forward of the psychic. This will naturally take years; so we have to go on starving for love and knowledge and other things divine.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is logical and orthodox; but the supramental, once it is down (O lingering once!) is supposed to bring these things up generally and induce an aeroplanic tendency to accurate swiftness in all who are on the road to it.

MYSELF: And if you have to wait for absolute purity of nature before the Supramental can come down I should say that you will have to go on waiting and waiting!

SRI AUROBINDO: Whose nature? It is I who have to bring it down. Do you mean to insinuate that I am impure? Sir, I raise my blameless head in dignified remonstrance.

MYSELF: Can't it accept the conditions and come down

and alter them? In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, in chapter VI you seem to say that after the descent those who do not change have to disappear.

SRI AUROBINDO: "Those"? what "those"? (I can't be referring to my own blessed writings all the time, so I don't know what you mean or what I meant either). And in whom?

11. 4. 35

MYSELF: About patient X, confidentially, I hear that she bothers herself with environmental influences. But, doesn't she say that she already feels much better?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, she was almost, indeed quite all right, but there have been dramas in which she is sometimes party, sometimes confidante (confidential information this!), so her sleep these two nights was not so good. I put strong force on her for several days and got her into excellent condition, but when these things come across!

MYSELF: Please see how you have understood my "impurity of nature". No wonder people will abuse me, curse me when they see that. They will say that you could not have written in that way unless I had 'insinuated' you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should they see it? It was a private "goāk"¹ between us.

MYSELF: It is you who will bring down the Supramental, certainly. But my question was whether it will come anyhow, in spite of all our resistances.

SRI AUROBINDO: I presume it will come anyhow, but it is badly delayed because if I am all the time occupied with dramas, hysterics, tragic comic correspondence (quarrels, chronicles, lamentations) how can I have time for this — the only real work, the one thing needful? It is not one or two, but twenty dramas that are going on.

MYSELF: I couldn't quite catch the meaning of your

¹ The reference or the meaning is unknown.

phrase "if you fellows give me a chance...." Nowadays we don't see many vital outbursts in the atmosphere.

SRI AUROBINDO: O happy blindness !

MYSELF: What is happening to me ? I like to lie down quietly at night and go on looking at the sky or hear the rustling of leaves. Then I wake up and say 'time is gone, no reading at all !'

SRI AUROBINDO: What harm ? "The sky's my book and rustling leaves my poems."

12. 4. 35

MYSELF: When the Supermind descends, our knowledge of it will do everything correctly without any scientific knowledge of the disease !

SRI AUROBINDO: What a lazy lot the Supramentals will be !

MYSELF: We are wondering when exactly the supramental will come down. Some people are saying that it will take one century.

SRI AUROBINDO: One day, one week, one month, one year, one decade, one century, one millenium, one light-year — all is possible. Then why do people choose one century ?

MYSELF: Cannot things like love and knowledge visit us now and then, and keep us going ?

SRI AUROBINDO: They can if you keep the doors open.

MYSELF: One material point. Can you sanction 3 pice worth of milk from the dairy, for an afternoon cup of tea ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very revolutionary and hair-raising proposal, but you can do it and risk the loss of hair.

13. 4. 35

MYSELF: What is this revolutionary invention of yours ? Tea a cause of loss of hair ? I am sure all the tea plan-

tations over the world will send up loud lamentations if this theory be true!

SRI AUROBINDO: It was not the tea but the 3 p. milk and the cause and effect were psychophysical, so there is no difficulty in accepting the theory.

MYSELF: X says that I have in me some capacity for "intuitive criticism" — whatever it may mean. I don't think I have got the right type of mind for criticism, or enough knowledge. Behind my bad logic, do you see any signs of a budding critic — intuitive or otherwise?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the easiest thing in the world to be a critic. Just look wise and slang the subject in grave well-timed sentences. It does not matter what you say.

MYSELF: What are these things, if any, that have a chance of getting manifested in me — poetry, prose, philosophy, etc., or medicine? I am asking for a yogic prophecy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why bother your head? When the supramental comes, and you bloom into a superman, you will just pick up anything you want and become perfect in it with a bang.

MYSELF: By the way, the Mother told D. it seems, that she would look as young as a girl of 16 in ten years' time. That would obviously mean the descent of your Supermind in the physical and its transformation.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know. As you know Time has only one lock of hair (too much tea drinking?) and the difficulty is to catch it.

17. 4. 35

SRI AUROBINDO: R is complaining of increasing headache — it can't be the slight astigmatism that is the cause of such intense aches. So will you dive into possibilities and bring up the pearl of knowledge?

19. 4. 35

MYSELF: It seems something has happened today. You have achieved some great victory: The Mother had at the evening meditation, an appearance sparkling like gold. On other days she looked as if she were tired of the job, and would like to give it up.

SRI AUROBINDO: It would be very natural if Mother felt like that! Never has there been such an uprush of mud and brimstone as during the past few months. However the Caravan goes on and today there was some promise of better things.

20. 4. 35

MYSELF: Since the descent of the Supermind will quicken up all the processes, why not take an axe of retrenchment and cut off all impeding elements ruthlessly? We shall flock again when the descent takes place.

SRI AUROBINDO: How? I am not Hitler. Things cannot be done like that. You might just as well ask the Mother and myself to isolate ourselves in the Himalayas, get down the Supramental, then toss everybody up in a blanket into the Supreme. Very neat but it is not practical.

MYSELF: If everything can be done by a miracle, won't it be very practical and useless spending so much time on individual dramas and hysterics?

SRI AUROBINDO: You mean practically useless?

25. 4. 35

MYSELF: Lack of interest and energy, disinclination to go to hospital — this is my condition for the last few days. I took a cup of tea and the energy came back.

SRI AUROBINDO: Sympathise with you. There was a

time when I was like that. Teaified cells — instead of deified.

MYSELF: But what's the reason? Vital resistance, physical inertia or fatigue or what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Gandhian uncooperating passive resistance of the vital disgusted to have to do the same thing regularly? Objection to rules — what? Discipline it.

MYSELF: The whole thing came to a climax. I wanted to go out for a walk by way of diversion but J said that the Mother takes away something from the vital.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why on earth should she?

MYSELF: Everybody seems to be working with so much interest, and look at me. What a curious mixture I am!

SRI AUROBINDO: Too many ingredients in too small and unstable proportions?

MYSELF: In any case, break this old being, Sir, and let something emerge, whatever it be!

SRI AUROBINDO: All right; let's have a try. Hammer, hammer, hammer! Only the being in question is a little — shall we say, solid?

26. 4. 35

MYSELF: Just now one outburst with Champaklal. I am sure he will tell you about it, Mother. I hate to trouble you with these trifles.

SRI AUROBINDO: Champaklal does not usually tell Mother about these things — outbursts of that kind are too common with him. And when heat meets heat, it is almost midsummer now.

29. 4. 35

MYSELF: I am plunged in a sea of dryness and am terribly thirsty for something. Along with it, waves of old desires. Any handy remedy?

SRI AUROBINDO: Eucharistic injection from above, pur-

gative rejection below; liquid diet, psychic fruit juice, milk of the spirit.

30. 4. 35

MYSELF: Your prescription, Sir, is splendid, but the patient is too poor to pay. I feel I am the least fitted for the path. The God-seekers whose lives I have read reveal what a great thirst they had for the Divine !

SRI AUROBINDO: And what deserts they had to pass through without getting the thirst satisfied ? The lives left out that ?

MYSELF: Whatever you may say, Sir, the path of Yoga is absolutely dry and specially that of Integral Yoga !

SRI AUROBINDO: One has to pass through the desert some time — doesn't follow that the whole path is like that.

MYSELF: For this Yoga, one must have the heart of a lion, the mind of a Sri Aurobindo and the vital of a Napoleon.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! Then I am off the list of the candidates — for I have neither the heart of a lion nor the vital of Napoleon.

MYSELF: You may say that when the psychic comes to the front, the path becomes a great Trunk Road of Roses. But it may take years and years !

SRI AUROBINDO: Does not matter how long it takes — it crops up one day or another.

MYSELF: And who knows one may not simply pine away in the dry desert before that ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No necessity to carry out any such disagreeable programme.

MYSELF: Have I the necessary requirements for the sadhana ? The only thing I seem to have is a deep respect for you, which almost all people have today.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is good that for accuracy's sake you put in the 'almost'.

MYSELF: I made the unhappy discovery that it is surely from a financial pressure outside that I jumped for the Unknown and the Unknowable.

SRI AUROBINDO: It must have been a stupendous pressure to produce such a gigantic leap.

All this simply means that you have, metaphorically speaking, the hump. Trust in God and throw the hump off.

1. 5. 35

MYSELF: 'Trust in God'? Personal or Impersonal? Tell me instead, "Trust in Me", that would be comforting, tangible and practical.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right. It comes to the same thing in the upshot.

3. 5. 35

MYSELF: I took J to the hospital for her ear, but the E. N. T. doctor found instead vasomotor rhinitis for which he prescribed parathyroid and calcium internally. But she is quite well at present. What shall we do?

SRI AUROBINDO: If she is quite well, what is the use of parathyroiding and calciating her?

C complains of oppression of the chest and sleeplessness began two days after there was no more medicine. She wants to starve herself at night; it appears Becharlal told her to do so! I have asked her to go to you. Is the famine method really a remedy for asthma?

4. 5. 35

MYSELF: I have again become the victim of people's tongue. I came to know that someone was imputing most abject motives to some of my actions, without my giving any cause of offence. I am not even familiar with the person.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you think people need a “cause” for criticising others ? It is done for the heavenly Ananda of the thing in itself. পরনিদ্ধা¹ is to the human vital sweeter than all the fruits of Paradise.

MYSELF: Can you explain why these poisonous shafts of criticism are thrown at me, without any reason at all ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Imagination and inference and joy of the perspicuous psychologist and joy of fault finding — and several other vital joys and joy of communicating to others is usually called gossip; quite enough to explain. No other reason wanted.

6. 5. 35

MYSELF: I am really amazed to hear that the Mother told a child, — X, I think — that only 5 or 6 here will realise the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO: “Blessed be they who believe all that they hear ! for they have become like little children. (Pseudo-sayings of Christ)”.

What is this joke ? You will tell me next that the Mother has confided to D² that the supramental now reigns upon the earth or declared the secrets of the ineffable Brahman to K’s baby. Are you by chance under the impression that X is 77 years old instead of her apparent age ? Who has invented this supreme jest ?

10. 5. 35

MYSELF: I am again having the same chronic trouble. At Pranam, I felt, Mother, that you were serious with me and the reason was, I thought, you did not like my comparing the sadhaks in the way I did yesterday.

I have no intention of belittling anyone.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! Mother did not think any-

¹ Slander.

² A child.

thing about it at all. Why the hell or heaven or why on earth or why the unearthly should she be displeased? You all seem to think of the Mother as living in a sort of daylong and nightlong simmering cauldron of displeasure about nothing and anything and everything under the sun. Lord! what a queer idea!

MYSELF: I had compared your behaviour, mentally, with others and said to myself: If such and such a person goes on doing this and that almost all the time of the day, still the Mother is Grace herself with her.

SRI AUROBINDO: And the same persons make comparisons of Mother's behaviour with others, and get into fits of revolt and *abhimān* and what not! What a mad Ashram!

MYSELF: I want your sword, and not the pen only, to sever these impressions at their very root.

SRI AUROBINDO: The sword is at your service, but for heaven's sake use it.

13. 5. 35

MYSELF: We are really getting tired and *hopeless*.

SRI AUROBINDO [underlining the word *hopeless*]: That is a good word. To be hopeless means to have no hop left in you.

14. 5. 35

MYSELF: I couldn't make out one word in your answer. Even Nolini failed. I thought you could fill up the gap from memory.

SRI AUROBINDO: It might have been just possible for me after some concentration and appeal to the supramental.

MYSELF: It seems another victory has been won by you? Some people saw red-crimson lights around the Mother a few days back.

SRI AUROBINDO: ??? Great Heavens ? which ? who ?
But there is nothing new in that.

MYSELF: I am reading on your 'Intuitive Mind'. Can you not release that manuscript in the meantime ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Which blessed manuscript ? I have a hundred ! I don't recall anything about Intuitive Mind.

15. 5. 35

MYSELF: I spoke of the manuscript (typed letter) on Avatar, on which you have written a lot, you said. But if it is among hundreds of other manuscripts, there is hardly any chance of rescuing it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, but the Avatar correspondence belongs to the distant past, what is the use of resuscitating it now ?

18. 5. 35

MYSELF: What a hell of a time you left me in, Sir ! The same emptiness, dryness and a negative pressure and one of the longest periods, too !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the confounded vital that does that when it is asked to change itself. The vital is a disciple of Gandhi as far as passive resistance goes — a master of non-cooperation.

21. 5. 35

MYSELF: It seems a great pressure is being brought down and many disappearing — beginning with T and ending with K.

SRI AUROBINDO: K has not disappeared. He has gone over there to enable D to come here during the vacation, for T would be otherwise alone there. He intends to come back — provided of course T does not capture him and put him in her pocket — if she has one.

23. 5. 35

MYSELF: I had a queer dream last night: I was bowing with love and devotion before a dark-complexioned gentleman, and he with equal affection raised me up and said, "You will require 18 years (Good Lord!!) to realise the Divine, out of which 12 years will pass away in just knocking about and playing." Heart-rending prophecy! But who is this old gentleman, and what does his prophecy amount to — please?

SRI AUROBINDO: The old dark-complexioned gentleman must be Old Nick, I suppose, and his prophecy amounts to Old Nickery.

24. 5. 35

MYSELF: My interest in poetry is growing again, but I could not complete a sonnet even after trying for three days. I don't mind the labour if only it is not spent in vain. There have been instances where people have taken up music with your approval, and they have worked at it to find later on that it was not their line.

SRI AUROBINDO: Approval or permission? People get it into their heads that they would like to do some music, because it is the fashion or because they like it so much and the Mother may tolerate it or say, "All right try." That does not mean they are predestined or doomed to be musicians or poets or painters according to the case. Perhaps, one of those who try may bloom, others drop off. X starts painting and shows only a fanciful dash at first, after a time he brings out work, remarkable work. Y does clever facile things; one day he begins to deepen and a possible painter in the making enthuses.¹ Others — well, they don't. But they can try — they will learn something about painting at least.

¹ Doubtful reading.

Labour at your sestets if the spirit pushes you. The Angel of Poetry may be delivered out of the labour, even if with a forceps.

27. 5. 35

MYSELF: We hear you are tremendously busy; hot speculations are in the air about near descents.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, thank you, sir ! I have had enough of them — the only result of the last descent was an upsurging of the subconscient mud.

MYSELF: In the upshot, many crashes and shipwrecks are apprehended.

SRI AUROBINDO: What an appetite for crashes !

MYSELF: Please tell us something so that we may prepare ourselves in time to bear the pressure.

SRI AUROBINDO: No pressure ! I am simply busy trying to get out of the mud — in other words to see if the damned subconscient can be persuaded to subside into something less dangerous, less complexful and more manageable.

MYSELF: S has profuse "whites".

SRI AUROBINDO: What on earth is this word ? Winter ? wintes ? It may be profuse but it is not legible. For God's sake don't imitate me.

MYSELF: Today I surprised myself by completing a poem of 18 lines in about 2 hours and 8 lines of another in 1 hour !

SRI AUROBINDO: Glory to God !

28. 5. 35

MYSELF: The word you tumbled against is "whites", Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Great Lord ! What an h ! I could not do worse myself.

MYSELF: When you said yesterday, "I am simply busy

trying to get out of the *mind*" etc., etc. I sighed, "What a happy ignorance! Will it be folly to get wise?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Not mind, sir. I have gone out of my mind long ago. I wrote "mud", mud, mud, mud of the subconscious.

29. 5. 35

MYSELF: S took one pill and from the next morning she had burning in her eyes. I washed her eyes and that gave an uneasiness in the head! Now I realise that I should have left her to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that is of course S's imagination. She decides in herself that the medicine is the cause of the burning and the uneasiness. Perhaps she decides it beforehand or rather something in her decides it. If her imagination were equally effective for cure it would be a great thing.

MYSELF: M complains of pain in the heels. There is no tenderness in the bone; some tenderness in the pad of fat. Internally salicylates can be tried, but there is no rheumatic history.

SRI AUROBINDO: No salicylates. It will spoil her stomach without curing the heel.

It may be "policeman's disease", as the French call it, "*maladie de sergent de ville*"; I have forgotten the technical name for it, but it is supposed to come from too much standing. I had it myself for something like a year because of walking or standing all day; that was when I used to meditate while walking. The Fr. Medical Dictionary says there is no remedy but rest. I myself got rid of it by application of force without any rest or any other remedy. But M is not a policeman and she does not walk while she meditates; so how did she get it?

30. 5. 35

MYSELF: It is then quite possible for M to get this disease, for she is almost always on her heels. Why not apply some Force and cure it?

SRI AUROBINDO: She has got too much force herself, though the heel may be, as with Achilles, her vulnerable point; the Force may not be able to get into it.

31. 5. 35

MYSELF: Here is a little Bengali love poem, Sir. After long travail ! Even then Nishikanta had to apply forceps at the end. I mark x against his lines.

SRI AUROBINDO: The marks are to my eyes invisible.

4. 6. 35

MYSELF: S thought he has turned out Hercules overnight, went on scrubbing, doing gate-duty and many other exercises without ever asking me.

SRI AUROBINDO: P says the work is light, but S purposely turned it into a Sandow exercise making all sorts of motions to give work to his muscles. Motive to get hungry so that he might conscientiously ask for an increase of food.

MYSELF: I noticed a very peculiar movement in me. I could no longer think of you — an absolute indifference, apathy was there. It seemed as if being before me yet you were not there.

SRI AUROBINDO: It looks like the subconscious — perhaps due to my writing about it? But also it may be that the subconscious has become my King Charles's head and I see it everywhere.

MYSELF: What are these things cropping up? How will they end?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope, in the illumination of the subconscious and a glorious transformation !

MYSELF: Today very suddenly J said, "The Mother is sending you to Paris." I thought the whole thing had somehow leaked out. When I asked him how he came to know about it, he replied, "It is absolutely my intuition." Do you believe it, Sir ? Can intuition be so exact ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not disposed to accuse the intuition in this case. I suspect R or somebody else of indiscretion with this intuitive outbreak as the result. Not that intuition cannot be exact, but we must not put too much on its poor back.

5. 6. 35

MYSELF: Another Bengali poem. Please cast a glance at it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I like your poem very much. The poet seems to have come out after all. So the pains of labour and even the forceps were useful. It is the turn of the Yogi to come out next, what ? Even with a forceps !

7. 6. 35

MYSELF: I was happy to know that you liked my poem, but I accept with much reservation your other statement that the poet has come out, for after a long labour I could not complete a sonnet. If the poet has come out I think it is a sort of Krishna's afternoon visit to Chaitanya ! As for Yoga, I submit myself to anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, at any rate it proves that he is there — for these poems were true poetry — and can come out even if he has still to be dragged out by the hair of his head. In time he will surely become less shy and difficult. As for the Yogi — well, we will see.

8. 6. 35

MYSELF: I can't resist the temptation of disturbing your Sabbath, Sir; here is a poem. The forceps were indispensable, but I hope it will be an 'Angel' !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not bad at all — can be accorded the "order of merit". Traces of the forceps are visible. But if you go on, probably the forceps will not be indispensable.

9. 6. 35

MYSELF: Sometimes I feel that if the Divine loves all equally, even then X and myself, for example, transgressing some vital rules of the Ashram, will not be equally treated. In my saner moments I have tried to look at it more rationally.

SRI AUROBINDO: That does not stand. Sometimes you might get nothing except perhaps an invisible stare; sometimes I might say, "Now, look here, Nirod, don't make an immortal ass of yourself — *that* is not the transformation wanted." Still another time I might shout, "Now ! now ! What the hell ! what the blazes !" So it would depend on the occasion, not only on the person.

MYSELF: If I may make a personal allusion. I have all of a sudden been the recipient of your jokes and humour denoting an intimacy. What can be the reason for it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Cast your plummet into the deep and perhaps you shall find it — or perhaps you will hit something that has nothing at all to do with it.

11. 6. 35

MYSELF: Is it because my psychic development needs it ? Is it because I have to be handled only in this way ?

SRI AUROBINDO: All these wise reasonings are rubbish. You are x and therefore you get yz , that is all.

MYSELF: You asked me to cast my plummet in the deep to find out the reason. But the "deep" is too deep for my plummet.

SRI AUROBINDO: For any mental plummet. It is not the mind that can discover these things.

MYSELF: S has got boils. What about giving him vaccine injections ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Have you not got a counter-smoking injection for him also ?

13. 6. 35

MYSELF: R says he is well today, free from the headache.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps that is why he proclaims that he is sad. He evidently means to become "artistic" in temperament. It is well known that you can't be an artist unless you are a prey to fits of romantic and meaningless sadness.

15. 6. 35

MYSELF: I am at the end of a long poem; have been at it for many hours, but could not extract anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: But what did you extract ? Not even words ? What a constipation !

MYSELF: I thought what a waste of time ! should one sit down to write without any inspiration seeming to drop ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose you have to go on sitting down until the inspiration gets converted and drops as soon as you sit.

MYSELF: You can't say that there is no application. But is it the right method, I ask ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Try, try again — as the spider said to Bruce.

MYSELF: Previously I was sleeping like a dog and now I am working like a bull.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Bull is the mother animal.

MYSELF: A flood of energy is there, but to what purpose ?

O Force, Force

Can you ever break this coarse

Tough stuff ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if you can achieve poetry like that in English, what may you not do in Bengali ?

17. 6. 35

MYSELF: Can you stretch your hand, Sir, and help me out of this mud of the subconscious, inconscient, universal nature or God knows what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am quite willing to stretch out any number of hands for the purpose. Hold on and you will get out.

18. 6. 35

MYSELF: Where is the joy of the creator ? I don't find or feel any !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the medical man with his forceps that comes in the way of the Ananda, I suppose, — too much occupied with the doubt and difficulty of delivery. But the poet is there beyond a doubt now. So buck up, kick off the Man of Sorrows from your shoulders and go cheerfully ahead.

19. 6. 35

MYSELF: You have often spoken of the Man of Sorrows in connection with me. But I was a cheerful fellow at school and college. So I am afraid he is a contribution, partly at least, of your Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not of my Yoga, but of the blasted atmosphere that has been created here by the theory that revolt, doubt and resultant shout and struggle and all that rot are the best way to progress. The Ashram has never been able to get out of it, but only some people have escaped. The others have opened themselves to the confounded Man of Sorrows and got the natural consequence. But why the devil did you do it? The Man of Sorrows is a fellow who is always making a row in himself and covering himself with a sevenfold overcoat of tragedy and gloom and he would not feel his existence justified if he couldn't be colossally miserable — when he gets on people's backs he puts the same thing on them. Yoga on the other hand tells you even if you have all sorts of unpleasantnesses to live in the inner sunlight — your own or God's. At least most Yogas do except the Vaishnava — but the Yoga here is not a Vaishnava Yoga.

21. 6. 35

MYSELF: You asked me why the devil did I open to the Man of Sorrows? How can I help it when the atmosphere is thick with doubt and depression. Human as we are, it is not easy to be free from them. They are inevitable in the very nature of things, aren't they?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not in this exaggerated form — and not with the vital luxuriating and wallowing in its misery. Attacks and perturbations on the surface, yes; but in some they are slight, in others rare and there is a clear mind or clear soul that looks at them and says, "O, you asses!" Mark that only a minority have allowed up the Man of Sorrows on their backs, though others have dallied with him. I admit that recently this minority has increased in numbers — the subconscious, I suppose!

MYSELF: We hear that you also had to undergo a lot

of suffering and despair — to the extent of committing suicide !!!

SRI AUROBINDO: What nonsense ! Suicide ! Who the devil told you that ? Even if I knew that all was going to collapse tomorrow, I would not think of suicide, but go on to do what I still could for the future.

MYSELF: Give us some vision or flame of your 'vishvarupa' to save us from being crushed by the Man of Sorrows, and let him be kicked into the dust-bin !

SRI AUROBINDO: You indeed write very skilfully in the style of the Man of Sorrows ! That is just his tone.

24. 6. 35

MYSELF: Today I went to see a foot-ball match; tomorrow is the finals. Can I go to see it, if I can arrange the dispensary work with R ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Lord he knows.

27. 6. 35

MYSELF: All rosy things and poetry have died and the old Nirod-self is the master of the field !

SRI AUROBINDO: Better turn it out again — it is not a place for it to graze in.

30. 6. 35

MYSELF: It was *after all* the Divine who brought me here. But *before all* was it not X's prayer and aspiration for me that was the cause ?

SRI AUROBINDO: As X did not pre-exist before the Divine and it is not she who is managing the affairs of the world, I prefer to believe that it was X who was the instrument of the Divine and not the Divine the instrument of X.

MYSELF: You know that I have not served or sought

any god. Yoga and religion were a repulsion to me. I can't conceive of any Krishna, Shiva or even Buddha helping me — since I have not taken their name.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps Mohamed ?

MYSELF: I have neither any *great being nor power* behind me which many have, I hear.

SRI AUROBINDO [underlining 'great being nor power']: Hallo, hallo ! What's that ?

MYSELF: I know only you and none else. You may say, "What's the use if you don't keep true to me?" Will you also say, "No such sentiments without fulfilling the conditions" ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The sentiment is all right, but you must either trundle along yourself or allow yourself to be trundled along (excuse this simile) towards the goal — one of the two, what the blazes !

3. 7. 35

MYSELF: My friendship with X seems to have broken. No use crying over spilt milk.

SRI AUROBINDO: Especially as it often got sour.

MYSELF: I shall leave patient S to Dr. B.

SRI AUROBINDO: She was disgusted with you, feels that you twisted her neck — but of course it is with the "doctor" and his treatment. She does not admit anything else. She always hides as long as she can, then becomes innocently frank and throws 9/10ths if not 10/10ths blame on the man. The eternal feminine ? Terribly so — but that is not the Real Woman.

8. 7. 35

MYSELF: Somehow it seems the atmosphere is very heavy nowadays. How I suffered without any apparent cause — as if something gripped me by the throat.

SRI AUROBINDO: You should not allow yourself to be

gripped by the throat — grip the other fellow's throat and fling him away.

MYSELF: Is it as our friend J says, the Ashram vital that affects me, or a personal one?

SRI AUROBINDO: In J's case it is personal — in yours it looks like surrender to the "Ashram" or rather to the "anti-Ashram" vital.

13. 7. 35

MYSELF: My cold has given me the quick realisation that everything in this world — including the Divine, is Maya. What Shankara and Buddha realised by sadhana, I realise by a simple cold!

SRI AUROBINDO: No need of sadhana for that — anybody with a fit of the blues can manage that. It is to get out of the Maya that sadhana is needed.

16. 7. 35

MYSELF: I was under the impression that the Mother could at once know of such things. Some say that she knows everything — all that is material or spiritual. Others maintain that she knows when the question of consciousness is involved, e.g. sex movements etc., but not so much about material things.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! You don't expect her mind to be a factual encyclopaedia of all that is happening on all the planes and in all the universes? Or even on this earth, e.g. what Lloyd George had for dinner yesterday?

20. 7. 35

MYSELF: X writes in an article that through sorrow and suffering God leads us to immortality; that there is a glory, even a bliss, in their conquest. I am afraid my

mystic vision and chicken heart do not see much in this theory. Conquest of sorrow and suffering is all right for brave hearts like Vivekananda's and X's, or even for poor hearts like mine when they have a Guru like Sri Aurobindo and a mother like our Mother here to do the sadhana for them; but what about people outside who are wallowing under the weight of their crosses !

SRI AUROBINDO:If you want a solution which will be agreeable to the human mind and feelings, I am afraid there is none. No doubt if human beings had made the universe, they would have done much better; but they were not there to be consulted when they were made. Only your central being was there and that was much nearer in its temerarious foolhardiness to Vivekananda's or X's than to the repining prudence of your murmuring and trembling human mentality of the present moment — otherwise it would never have come down into the adventure. Or perhaps it did not realise what it was in for ? It is the same with the wallowers under their cross. Even now they wallow because something in them likes the wallowing and bears the cross, because something in them chooses to suffer. So ? —

21. 7. 35

MYSELF: Why am I getting so disturbed ? Life seems to be a wash-out. Have I fallen again into the blessed lower vital dungeon ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose so. It is the vital that refuses to leave its movements and yet at the same time can't enjoy them (i.e. why life seems to be a wash-out).

MYSELF: I am more and more relapsing into a gloom and glum.

SRI AUROBINDO: Tamas of a disappointed but still recalcitrant vital.

MYSELF: Do you intend to give me a push or a kick this time at the Darshan, or just a touch as usual ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I think for that your vital has to make up your mind whether it is going to leave its old moorings or not. Otherwise a kick will only give a gloom and glum and a push make it tumble down and say "O Lord ! what a wash-out is life !"

22. 7. 35

MYSELF: It is because I made up my mind long ago to leave the old moorings that I was able to kick at the old life, but the moorings seems to be very deep beyond my human reach.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, you made up your mind and it remains made up — but I was speaking of your vital and its mind. It is because your vital is kicking against your made up mind that there is the trouble. You ought to talk to it more seriously and firmly and when necessary give it a calm and judicious whipping until it becomes a good boy.

23. 7. 35

MYSELF: I am trying to have a dash again at poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very glad to hear it.

26. 7. 35

MYSELF: Your general notice about the suspension of correspondence has struck terror ! My only yoga consisted in this correspondence with you.

SRI AUROBINDO: You can count yourself among the exceptions who are allowed to write (with Dilip, Arjava and others). But don't flourish your good fortune (if it is one) in the face of others — keep it dark.

28. 7. 35

MYSELF: We accepted G's report about his aunt's temperature being 99°, with some suspicion.

SRI AUROBINDO: I did not believe at all in his 99°. G is an overmental sadhak who creates facts according to his liking by the power of *vāk*.¹

30. 7. 35

MYSELF: About G's aunt — to detect T. B. bacilli in the urine, the urine has to be injected into a guinea-pig, the doctor says, for absolute certainty. The charge for it will be Rs. 7 and G is not very willing. I suppose it can be omitted, though important for the patient.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, you can insist on his forking out that, if he is unwilling. Luck for the guinea-pig!

You have permitted S to have a stove, I hear. Have you also permitted him to cook and gobble rasogollas? I ask for information, because if he is supposed to digest, it is all right — otherwise!

31. 7. 35

MYSELF: Yes I permitted the stove since he was complaining of much flatulence, so that he could take milk diluted with barley and sago, but rasogollas not at all.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am informed that he ate two rasogollas and offered to P. P told him to confess, but he has not done so — for fear I suppose that his stove should be taken away. Suren sometime ago wrote that S was making sweets, but one cannot always believe Suren's statements, so I said nothing about it.

MYSELF: If the stove is taken away he will again complain of flatulence. Please see then if you can find out some way.

¹ Speech.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know; but one can't be responsible for the results if he goes on like that. If he expects the Divine Force to be always fighting against his Rasogollas to protect his confounded liver !

1. 8. 35

MYSELF: Today we got the result of the urine exam. The poor pig died of toxic symptoms. No definite light on the diagnosis.

SRI AUROBINDO: Alas, poor pig !

5. 8. 35

MYSELF: You really rescued me yesterday. My humble thanks. Got a few knocks though.

SRI AUROBINDO: Knocks and shocks are good for the soul, according to some philosophers. Agree ?

MYSELF: It seems that wherever one turns one sees the same humanity — with all its ignorance and incapacity.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. That is what I have been telling all along. It is not without reason that I am eager to see something better in this well-meaning but woe-begone planet.

6. 8. 35

MYSELF: I suppose I have to agree. Since you said that I have to allow myself to be kicked along, then what about the other philosophers ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The kicking was suggested as a mild stimulant; it could not be included in shocks and knocks. However knocks can help — as man is now constituted, but it is not part of my philosophy, only a viewpoint of experience.

7. 8. 35

MYSELF: J has a swelling of her lower lip; she surmises that it is a hint to stop her from talking too much. When I smiled incredulously, she argued that it is quite possible.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is possible. It depends on the person and how he or she takes things.

MYSELF: She added that I could ask you if I liked. What do you say about the great hint?

SRI AUROBINDO: Hints are hints only when you take them — otherwise they are only swellings on a lip.

MYSELF: What did you mean by 'Poet is out'? Forceps delivery can't be more difficult.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is out, but with difficulty.

MYSELF: A poem of 14 lines taking so many days! Anyway what do you think of it?

SRI AUROBINDO: My brother Monomohan in his early days would have taken 40 and been surprised at his own rash celerity in writing.

I like it very well.

11. 8. 35

MYSELF: Today I lost my temper over a patient's obstinacy. He would not listen to my instructions. But can you tell me why I've been feeling a sort of antagonism towards him?

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be a Dr. Fell affair. "The reason why I cannot tell" — or it may be the result of a feeling of accumulated bother.

16. 8. 35

MYSELF: Well, Sir, have I covered a few milestones on the journey to the Infinite?

SRI AUROBINDO: Move on, move on !

MYSELF: What about the uprush of mud ? Has it settled down, and are people now floating in the flood of the Supramental ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is still there, but personally I have become superior to it and am travelling forward like a flash of lightning, that is to say zig-zag but fairly fast. Now I have got the hang of the whole hanged thing — like a very Einstein I have got the mathematical formula of the whole affair (unintelligible as in his own case to anybody but myself) and am working it out figure by figure.

As for people, no ! They are not floating in the supramental — some are floating in the higher mind, others, rushing up into it and flopping down into the subconscious alternately, are swinging from heaven into hell and back into heaven, again back into hell *ad infinitum*, some are sticking fast contentedly or discontentedly in the mud, some are sitting in the mud and dreaming dreams and seeing visions, some have their legs in the mud and their head in the heavens etc., etc., an infinity of combinations, while many are simply nowhere. But console yourself — these things, it seems, are inevitable in the process of great transformations.

MYSELF: I send a poem as an offering — the result of the Darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO: By the way very much pleased with your offering. Even if he is slow in delivery and his Muse not অনন্ত প্রসব¹ like H's or D's or —, the poet is undeniable.

17. 8. 35

MYSELF: What is this mathematical formula that you have all of a sudden found out ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I told you it was unintelligible to any-

¹ Infinitely productive.

body but myself, so how the deuce do you expect me to give it to you in a tangible form? It is my mathematical discovery — don't seek for any other cause — my grand new, brand-new mathematical formula!

19. 8. 35

MYSELF: It appears you have made people happy at this Darshan in spite of their oscillations, sitting contentedly on their mud thrones. My discontented self is one of that happy group!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, one can be happy in a swing, or even in the mud! The perfect sadhak should indeed be happy in all circumstances, সর্বথা বর্তমানোপি, as the Gita puts it.

MYSELF: But any big deal near at hand?

SRI AUROBINDO: What great expectations! Besides I am not Roosevelt. I am only going ahead, therefore visibly cheerful though not yet demonstrably exuberant.

MYSELF: But whatever it may be, keep up this patting, Sir, for heaven's sake!

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know. Provided no sadhak interprets my pappings as blows and cries "Why did you thrash me, Sir?"

20. 8. 35

MYSELF: Your namesake Aurobindo Bose says that you will soon be getting two or three lakhs of rupees and he wants me to get it verified from you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope! let us hope! It would be very handy indeed.

23. 8. 35

MYSELF: Darshan atmosphere and its influence seem to be waning away so soon! Old friends or foes are

stepping in !

SRI AUROBINDO: There is always an adverse movement after the darshan, the *revanche*¹ of the lower forces. I had a stoppage myself but I am off again riding on the back of my Einsteinian formula.

MYSELF: All poetry gone ! Stuck up in the sestet of a sonnet. I wonder really when this force will tumble down or will it ever !

SRI AUROBINDO: You have formed like many poets a bad habit of sticking in the mud between inspired jolts. You have to dissolve the habit — as a doctor you must find out a dissolvent which will do it.

24. 8. 35

MYSELF: You surprise me by your phrase, ‘between inspired jolts’, for most of the poems have been written by halves, quarters with some intervals and many attempts in between. That is why I can’t look upon a poem as having any worth.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if that is not writing by “inspired jolts”, what is ? The worth of a poem depends on what has come out, not on the way in which it has come out.

MYSELF: It is proposed to include me in an Ashram Anthology of Bengali poets. But won’t my work look pale and anaemic beside something like Nishikanta’s, all splendour and glow ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. Besides, there must always be varieties in an anthology which is like a museum or a botanical collection. So a *modestum Nirodicum* inside will do no harm even beside a *flaminga Nishikantica*.

26. 8. 35

MYSELF: Any chance of coming out of the mud or

¹ Revenge.

the same caravan speed ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What ? For whom ? Which way ?

28. 8. 35

MYSELF: With regard to the publication of J's book, she put my name in the letter she was writing to you. I asked her to strike it out as the reference to me was too short and did not convey my exact idea. She struck it out but said that I was afraid of my name being included. This is what I got after having done so much !

SRI AUROBINDO: These are the pin-pricks of life. You must walk warily if you want to avoid them. Beware of dropping pins about — they may prick the dropper. J's resentment at being plagiarised is a pin of importance.

29. 8. 35

MYSELF: Today I shall request you to “stand and deliver” on a different subject. What is exactly the significance of the day of your Siddhi ? Different people have different ideas about it. Some say that the Avatar of the Supermind descended in you !

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! Whose imagination was that ?

MYSELF: Others say that you were through and through overmentalised.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it is not quite the truth but nearer to the mark.

MYSELF: I myself understood that on that day you achieved the Supermind.

SRI AUROBINDO: There was never any mention of that from our side.

MYSELF: Dutta, I think, declared at that time that you had conquered sleep, food, disease and death. Is there any truth in that statement ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not aware of this gorgeous pro-

clamation. What was said was that the Divine (Krishna or the Divine Presence or whatever you like) had come down into the material. It was also proclaimed that I was retiring — obviously to work things out. If all that was achieved on November 24, 1926, what on earth remained to work out, and if the Supramental was there, for what blazing purpose did I need to retire? Besides, are these things achieved in a single day? If Dutta said anything like that she must have been in a prophetic mood and seen the future in the present!

MYSELF: If you did not achieve the Supermind at that time, how was it possible for you to talk about it or know anything about it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I am hanged. You can't know anything about anything before you have achieved it? Because I have seen it and am in contact with it, O logical baby that you are! But achieving it is another business.

Good Lord! And what do these people think I meant when I was saying persistently that I was trying to get the Supermind down into the material? If I had achieved it on Nov. 24th, 1926, it would have been there already for the last nine years, isn't it? I have stood, but have not delivered. I had time for standing a moment, but none for a delivery — however pregnant my mind or my overmind may be. But really what a logic! One must become thoroughly supramental first (achieve supermind) and then only one can begin to know something about supermind? Well! However if I have time one day, I will deliver — for evidently with such ideas about, an *éclaircissement* is highly advisable.

MYSELF: Didn't you say that some things were getting supramentalised in parts?

SRI AUROBINDO: Getting supramentalised is one thing and the achieved supramental is another.

30. 8. 35

MYSELF: You confess that you have not delivered but what little you have, there are many points that need a few more lines.

SRI AUROBINDO: Pinpoints ?

MYSELF: But if you have no time I shall have to disturb your Sunday slumber — either by my questioning or by a long poem. You can choose either of the tortures, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me. I don't sleep on Sundays. I climb mountains of outside letters which have accumulated for want of week-day time.

The poem, please !

MYSELF: The "pin" I dropped has caused a septic sore in the pricked !

SRI AUROBINDO: You can advise her to be Yogic and not mind.

MYSELF: I was wondering if it is possible to get J's book published from the A. P. House with your permission.

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose they are afraid to venture, being a concern with pin-head profits and no capital to speak of.

MYSELF: So Dr. M is as positively definite about the nature and cause of Y's disease, as you are in your own domain.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not positive about anything. I am simply negative and positively negative about the damned thing in this state of sanguinary incertitude. As to my personal opinions I have them but they are very private.

1. 9. 35

MYSELF: I send you the entire medical text book so

that you may read for yourself on page 160, the report regarding Y's case. You can with your good knowledge of English and supramental intuition, decide and act as you think best.

SRI AUROBINDO: The language of the book itself seems to me supramental, i.e. medical, therefore unintelligible. It holds forth with tender insistence on the soft sore, but it leaves the point vague, how far and by what means the damned thing can be contracted without the particular contact.

MYSELF: You remember Y gave me the cycle story. Just to test him, I asked him if he had used anybody's clothes etc., etc. He swallowed the bait and said that he did and that probably was the source of the infection.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously he caught the rope of evasion you threw to him.

MYSELF: He had the cheek to come and be examined by us when he could get himself treated in Madras.

SRI AUROBINDO: Cheek is one of the fortes of Y. He has not two cheeks but ten thousand.

MYSELF: What is happening really, Sir? Have you stirred sleeping snakes and monsters that are rushing up now?

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me, they were not sleeping at all; they are simply coming into light.

MYSELF: Now I hear Z is leaving and that too to see R. M. A cultured intellectual and sensible man thinks of seeing somebody else after seeing and getting so much from you!

SRI AUROBINDO: You are astonished? Really, you seem to be living like a cherub chubby and innocent with his head in the clouds ignorant of the wickedness of men. I thought by this time the revolts of Z were common knowledge.

MYSELF: But this is absolutely inconceivable and unimaginable a phenomenon, and makes my head reel.

SRI AUROBINDO: O dear me ! Cherub ! cherub !

MYSELF: A vast abyss has opened its jaws to swallow Z for ever.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you mean R. M ? He is not an abyss and he has no desire to swallow.

MYSELF: I tell you, Sir, it will be a pathetic failure on the part of the Divine !

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! It will be a failure on the part of Z. I don't profess to transform men against their will.

MYSELF: Is all this fury not excusable ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very ignorant at least. Ignorance may be bliss, but it is not a defence or excuse.

4. 9. 35

MYSELF: R and self are invited for tea to the oculist's place — there's some function. I suppose it'll be rude not to go. Again social consciousness ? — you may say. But say it again then. Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, social consciousness — according to S. C., it is certainly rude not to go. What it may be from another S. C. (spiritual consciousness), is another matter.

5. 9. 35

MYSELF: R's pleurisy is much better. The remaining few signs are of no importance, only he must not expose himself to cold, neither smoke much nor take wine.

SRI AUROBINDO: Jehovah ! You are recommending him a little smoke and wine ? What next ? All right — except for the last ominous touch.

6. 9. 35

MYSELF: You remember you once wrote to Z your

prophecy that he will turn out a spiritual poet; has it been fulfilled? Where is the prophecy now? I am asking as a perplexed man, not as a 'broken spiritual pot.'

SRI AUROBINDO: As a spiritual poet he is not a failure, it is as a spiritual pot that he is a failure.

MYSELF: I suppose people are not ready to pay the price because the soul clings to the Ignorance for the sake of experience, if what you say about the origin of creation is true.

SRI AUROBINDO: ...I suppose you are floundering about in the confusion of the idea that the "desire-soul" in the vital is the true psyche of man.... I refuse to sanctify the revolt of the lower nature by calling it the sanction of the soul. If it is the soul that wants to fail, why is there any struggle or sorrow over the business? It would be a perfectly smooth affair.

The soul would lift its hat to me and say "Hallo! You've taught me a lot, I'm quite pleased but now I want a little more fun in the mud. Good-bye." And I too would have to say, "O.K. I quite agree. I was glad to see you come, I am equally glad to see you go. All is divine and A. I. — the soul's sanction, go and mud away to your soul's content."

7. 9. 35

MYSELF: What does the abbreviation "A. I." mean in your yesterday's letter?

SRI AUROBINDO: I'm hanged if I know. I was referring to something that had cropped up in the course of the debate, but I must have put the wrong initials and probably also failed to finish the sentence. I think I had meant to write "I. I. (Ignorance and Inconscience) is the law" or something to that effect. But it is better to drop it.

MYSELF: Have you had the time and enough appetite to gulp the little whale? If you had I hope it wasn't nauseating!

SRI AUROBINDO: The whale taken as a whole tasted very well; its oil was strong and fattening, its flesh firm and full and compact and whalish. Not quite so exquisite as the sonnet minnows, but the quality of a whale can't be that of a minnow. As a whale, it deserves all respect and approbation.

MYSELF: After the day's work in the Dispensary Dr. B and J went to the pier and I went to a friend's place. But somehow Dr. B did not feel at ease there and returned to the Dispensary and found a crowd gathered there. B. P. had been bitten by a scorpion. I was sent for and rushed to see that Dr. B was already there. I am rather baffled by the whole incident. Was there some force working behind, which drew all of us to the required spot at the right time to save an Ashramite, or was the whole thing just an accident like other such incidents?

SRI AUROBINDO:These things manifest differently, in a different form or transcription in different people. If it had been Socrates and not Becharlal who was there, — which would have been useless as he was no doctor and highly inconvenient to you as he would certainly have turned the tables on you and avenged me by cross-examining you everyday and passing you through a mill of philosophical conundrums and unanswerable questions — but still if he had been there, he would have felt it as an intimation from his daemon, "Turn back, Socrates; it is at the Ashram that you ought to be now." Another might have felt an intuition that something was up at the Ashram. Yet another would have heard a voice or suggestion saying, "If you went back at once it would

be useful" — or simply "Go back, back; quick, quick !" without any reason. A fourth would have seen a scorpion wriggling about with its sting ready. A fifth would have seen the agonised face of B. P. and wondered whether he had a tooth-ache or a stomach-ache. In Becharlal's case it was simply an unfelt force that changed his mind in a way that seemed casual but was purposeful, and this obscure way is the one in which it acts most often with most people. So that's thus.

MYSELF: Krishna Ayyar has cold and slight fever. Given aspirin. Requires Divine help.

SRI AUROBINDO: One tablet of aspirin and another of aspiration might do.

10. 9. 35

MYSELF: I was not at all "floundering about" between "desire-soul" and the true "psyche".

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if you were not, why did you represent the experience of the lower nature as such a rich and glorious thing? It is the desire-soul or the life-being that finds it (sometimes) like that.

MYSELF: If failures are due to the revolt of the lower nature, why should that revolt occur in A's case and not in B's? Past Karma? And by what is this Karma decided?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because A is not B and B is not A. Why do you expect all to be alike and fare alike and run abreast all the way and all arrive together?

It is Prakriti and Karma, so long as the Ignorance is there. The hen lays an egg and the egg produces a hen and that hen another egg and so on *ad infinitum* — till you turn to the Light and get it.

MYSELF: Because the soul wants more 'fun' in the mud of Ignorance, people follow their "round of pleasure and pain", and their lack of faith etc., is due to their soul still wanting Ignorance.

SRI AUROBINDO:The mind resists with an obstinate persistency in argument and a constant confusion of ideas, the vital with a fury of bad will aided by the mind's obliging reasonings on its side, the physical resists with an obstinate inertia and crass fidelity to old habit, and when they have done, the general Nature comes in and says, "What, you are going to get free from me so easily? Not if I know it," and it besieges and throws back the old nature on you again and again as long as it can. Yet you say it is the soul that wants all this "fun" and goes off laughing and prancing to get some more. You are funny. If the poor soul heard you, I think it would say, "Sir, methinks you are a jester", and look about for a hammer and break your head with it.

MYSELF: But if you ask me, as you do, "Why then is there so much struggle and sorrow?" well, I am floundered, unless one can say that though the soul has given up, still a longing, lingering look is bound to be there.

SRI AUROBINDO: You call that a mere look! I suppose that if you saw an Irish row or a Nazi mob in action, you would say, "These people are making slight perceptible gestures and I think I hear faint sounds in the air."

My dear sir, be less narrowly logical (with a very deficient logic even as logic), take a wider sweep; swim out of your bathing pool into the open sea and waltz round the horizons! For anything that happens, there are a hundred factors at work and not only the one just under your nose; but to perceive that you have to become cosmic and intuitive or overmental and what not. So, alas!

11. 9. 35

MYSELF: With great difficulty I have deciphered your Supramental writing. Now it requires to be metabolised. But one point remains to be clarified.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which diabolical point was that? Some point of a pin on which the whole universe can stand?

12. 9. 35

MYSELF: It appears the Mother is turning towards manifestation, viz., the Town Hall decoration, A. P. House, Art Exhibition in Paris, etc. I heartily like it, Sir. Many, many valuable years have passed by!

SRI AUROBINDO: Why valuable years? Are some years valuable and others non-valuable? There is no question of Art Exhibition in Paris before 1937 which may be a valuable year, but is still far off.

MYSELF: During the hospital work, I feel myself submerged in Inconscience. No remembrance of the Mother at all.

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not matter. This is not the supramental manifestation — it is simply a little game on the way.

MYSELF: Do you work on those people also and can your Force be invoked in aid of that suffering populace?

SRI AUROBINDO: What people? Which suffering populace? Mother is not taking up A. P. H. or decorating Town Hall for the sake of any suffering populace.

MYSELF: From the falling down of the bottle — Simpson's discovery of chloroform — to the Irish Sweep-stake, everything seems to be this blessed play of forces, but not of Chance! The bottle had to fall for the great discovery!

SRI AUROBINDO: Why shouldn't it fall? Something had to happen so that human stupidity might be enlightened, so why not the agency of a bottle?

MYSELF: I am afraid I am once again knocking my head against a cosmic problem.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very much so, sir.

MYSELF: Instead of saying 'shut up' you have devised a very nice trick of evasion, Sir! for everything 'a play of forces'. Therefore no more questions. Long live the play of forces!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the truth. Why get wild with the truth? It is like knocking your nose against one of Epstein's statues in the hope that it might turn out to be curved or change into a fairy beauty.

MYSELF: What I write now is not about the play of forces, but about a confusion, conflict and despair in me.

SRI AUROBINDO: O Lord God! again despair!

MYSELF: The confusion and despair are because I don't seem to have any go at all.

SRI AUROBINDO: Pshaw! Pooh! Rubbish!

MYSELF: Not a day has gone when I could say I have aspired strongly for anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well then, aspire weakly and phantasmally — but anyhow aspire!

MYSELF: Of course, I find that after this Darshan, the desires and impulses aren't as acute as before, but that's not enough.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, that's an admission. It is not enough, but it is something.

MYSELF: I am as unconscious as before about the Force and its working.

SRI AUROBINDO: Doesn't matter. Let the force work anyhow — in time it will have its result.

MYSELF: What most upsets me at present is that there is no current of aspiration.

SRI AUROBINDO: Low current of electricity? Well, well, let us see to the dynamo.

MYSELF: Is that a very satisfying state or is there any future ray of hope?

SRI AUROBINDO: Any number of rays — a whole sun.

MYSELF: What I would like to have is something stabilised: peace, force, purity or Presence.

SRI AUROBINDO: So would I, so would anybody. It is not enough to like, you must get the thing done and peg on till it is done.

MYSELF: Neither can I fix my aspiration on any particular aspect. Now I want peace, now force, now Ananda....

SRI AUROBINDO: That's the confounded wobbling mobility of your mind.

MYSELF: Isn't it a confusion and isn't it despairing?

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be a confusion, but it is not *désespérant*. (Despairing in this sense is bad English, by the way.) Plenty of people have had that before you and yet arrived all right.

MYSELF: Once you gave me the formula of Peace, Force and Presence. Shall I try to stick to it?

SRI AUROBINDO: For mercy's sake do. Peace first, Force tumbling into the Peace, the Presence at any stage.

MYSELF: But really, Sir, how long to stagnate in this passive pool of the Immobile? Is there no chance of being as dynamic as a flood?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not so long as you merely ratiocinate and wobble — unless the dynamo begins to work in sheer exasperation at your foolishness — which is quite possible.

MYSELF: When a sincere aspirant like K took so many years to draw in all his limbs into his shell and do what may be called real sadhana, our expectation and hankering is sheer madness.

SRI AUROBINDO: And who did that feat in a few days, weeks or months, I should like to know? I am sure I didn't.

Real sadhana, he has been doing for a long time. That is why he is now able to draw in his limbs.

Well, expecting to do it in a record time or shouting sorrowfully because that doesn't happen is rather windy.

MYSELF: I suppose we have to go on dreaming that one day we shall also come to such a blissful height. Till then, Man of Sorrows is my companion, alas !

SRI AUROBINDO: No need at all ! Call in the Man of Mirth and dismiss the other Applicant.

MYSELF: Another confusion about poetry. I haven't been able to find out any "dissolvent" and I take it that the Muse is treating me in the same way as the Yogi is doing.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it seems to me that the Muse has done a good — ¹ for you already, considering that you did not start with the vocation. O favoured unappreciative !

MYSELF: Since there is no inspiration, the call of the moon, the sky, the sea and the unknown takes me away to the pier at night.

SRI AUROBINDO: Absorb the moon, sky, sea and the unknown and trust to the inner alchemy to turn them into poetry.

MYSELF: I am so tired with this 'play' of yours, Sir, that sometimes I have a longing to jump into the silence of Nirvana.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not so easy to do it as to write it.

MYSELF: However, what shall I hear from the mighty pen as a remedy for my chronic despair and impatience ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Now look here, as to the Yoga etc., if I can be patient with you and your despairs, why can't you be patient with the forces ? Let me give you a "concrete" instance. X is a sadhak of whom it might be said that if anyone could be said to be incapable of any least progress in yoga, X was the very person, blockhead absolute and unique in that respect. Mulish, revolted, abusive. No capacity of any kind, no experience, not a shadow, little or blessed pinpoint of it anyhow, anywhere or at any time for years and more years and still more years. Finally some while ago X begins to fancy or feel

¹ Word indecipherable.

that X wants Mother and nothing and nobody else (that was the result of my ceaseless and futile hammering for years), X makes sanguinary row after row because X can't get Mother, not a trace, speck or hint anywhere of Mother. Threats of departure and suicide very frequent. I sit mercilessly and severely upon X, not jocularly as I do on you. X still weeps copiously, because Mother does not love X. I sit on X still more furiously but go on pumping force and things into X. X stops that but weeps copiously because X has no faith, does not love Mother (all this goes on for months and months). Finally one day after deciding to stop weeping for good and all X suddenly finds X was living in barriers, barriers broken down, vast oceanic wideness inside X, love, peace etc. rushing in, or pressing to rush; can't understand what on earth all this is — or what to do — writes for guidance. Now, sir, if my yuga-like persistence could work a miracle like that with such a one, why can't you expect an earlier result with you, O Nirod of little faith and less patience? Stand and answer.

14. 9. 35

MYSELF: Herewith I send you a typescript of the letter on the mysterious X. From what I could make out of your mysterious handwriting about this X is that she must be a plucky girl.

SRI AUROBINDO: But why type for the story of X? I hope you realise it is secret history.

MYSELF: With that thrashing — if you are really capable of it — and the Mother's 'hard looks' to boot, if she had stuck to you, I must say that she is exceptionally enduring.

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose X was able to stick because X had no brains. It is the confounded reasoning brain that is the ruin of you. For instead of taking the lesson of things it begins reasoning about them in this

futile — shall I say asinine — way. My idea however is that X stuck because X had nowhere else to go. Of course that is the outer reason, the real one being that something unknown pinned X down here.

MYSELF: One word about this 'patience', Sir, I am afraid there is a big fallacy in that. You can take 50 years to make me at least a Supramental ass. And this would still be a short period for you, since in the supramental time-scale 50 years will be 50 days of ours.

SRI AUROBINDO: If that is so, then you will become a Supramental ass in 50 days — since my years are supramental, that follows. So what's the row about? With this glowing prospect before you!

MYSELF: So I have stood and answered. But no amount of standing and answering will serve the purpose. I shall now learn to "stand and wait" as "they also serve who only stand and wait", says Milton.

SRI AUROBINDO: Thank God! a most comforting resolution — for me at any rate.

Doctor Saheb,

I am sending to the dispensary two cases —

1. P — she had tuberculosis? at 19 for six months, she says, and at 25 for a short time, but cured quickly. Sounds queer, for tuberculosis at that age usually gallops, doesn't it? Anyhow she has symptoms which need elucidation by medical authority. To be examined and reported.

2. Y — says ...had an illness which the Punjab Doctor called by some outlandish word I don't recognise — bed-ridden for 2½ months, cured by injections — twice recurred but healed of itself — nothing for the last 3 years — coming here cropped up again. (Thanks to the forces at play for that!!). Apprehends. Cross examine and examine. Does not know English, don't know if you know Hindi. Anyhow B is there.

Feel inclined to swear but refrain.

N. B. Keep quiet about the affair, please — strict medical discreetness needed !

Sri Aurobindo

15. 9. 35

MYSELF: I seize the golden opportunity to ask you to deliver about the Supermind that you had promised. I hope you remember it; if not, the question was: what is exactly the significance of 24th of November ? Overmental, supramental realisation or what ? You said that it was something like the descent of Krishna in the material. Some say that the descent took place in you. But you are not matter, are you ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not ? Why can't I be matter ? Or represent it at least ? At least you will admit that I have got some matter in me and you will hardly deny that the matter in me is connected or even continuous (in spite of the Quantum theory) with matter in general ? Well, if Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent descended into my matter with an inevitable extension into connected general Matter, what is the lack of clarity in the statement of a descent into the material ? What does logic say ?

MYSELF: By your "trying to bring down the Supermind", we understand that the ascent is done and now the descent has to be made. Something like one going up to you at Darshan and getting all the bliss, joy, etc., and trying to bring it down and not lose it as soon as one steps out. And what is this again ? You say you are in contact with it and then again that you are very near the tail of it, sounds queer ! Contact and no contact ?

SRI AUROBINDO: But, supposing I reached supermind in that way, then under such conditions would it be probable that I should come down again at the risk of losing it ? Do you realise that I went upstairs and have not come down again ? So it was better to be in contact

with it until I had made the path clear between S and M. As for the tail, can't you approach the tail of an animal without achieving the animal? I am in the physical, in matter — there is no doubt of it. If I threw a rope up from Matter, noose or lasso the Supermind and pull it down, the first part of Mr. S that will come near me is his tail dangling down as he descends, and that I can seize first and pull down the rest of him by tail-twists. As for being in contact with it, well I can be in contact with you by correspondence without actually touching you or taking hold even of your tail, can't I? So there is nothing funny about it — perfectly rational, coherent and clear.

MYSELF: Another point; have you written anywhere what would be the nature of the physical transformation?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have not, I carefully avoided that ticklish subject.

MYSELF: What would it be like? Change of pigment? Mongolian features into Aryo-Greco? Bald head into luxuriant growth? Old men into gods of eternal youth?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not seven tails with an eighth on the head — everybody different colours, blue, magenta, indigo, green, scarlet, etc.; hair luxuriant but vermilion and flying erect skywards; other details to match. Amen.

Now you can't say surely that all your points have not been cleared?

16. 9. 35

MYSELF: By the way, vomiting seems to be a very common complaint at present.

SRI AUROBINDO: I notice that these things come by epidemics in the Ashram. One starts, others follow suit.

MYSELF: H is having vomiting too. Yogic force on the brain?

SRI AUROBINDO: Jehoshaphat! What has the brain got to do with vomiting? Throwing up excess of Yogic know-

ledge ? That might be with H the philosopher, but it does not fit the others.

MYSELF: I propose, if you approve, to take the three ladies: P, K and Sh. to the hospital for a screen-examination.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not advisable. I believe if you could give these people (P, Sh. etc.) some nervous balance, their ailments would walk off into blazes.

MYSELF: Now, lend thy ears, Sir, to my ailment ! I was disappointed by your yesterday's answer about the Supermind, for it is far from what you had in your mind when you made the promise.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am disappointed that you could not appreciate the splendidly coloured prospects held out there. But what had I in mind and what was this promise ? Apart from these colours my two other answers were, though figurative, yet very much to the "point".

MYSELF: Supposing you were able to create a race of Supermen, then there would be two strata — Supermen and men.

SRI AUROBINDO: There will also be cats. Look at the Ashram !

MYSELF: Then the Supermen will no longer concern themselves with the lives and histories of men just as men are at present indifferent to the lives of animals ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Men are not indifferent to lives of animals — at least not in Europe. Look at the open-air zoos — hospitals for animals — refuges for unwanted cats and dogs — live-farms etc., etc. !

18. 9. 35

MYSELF: I am still in the 'slough of Despond'. Really, Sir, no belief or faith in effort at all. I will choose the mulish revolting way and that would be the easiest. What do you say ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am inclined to say "Pshaw !" Have

more faith, not less.

MYSELF: Apart from this, I have observed that whenever I communicate an experience to you, the next moment it stops. I hope my Guru is not in any way connected with this! I remember a story of my childhood: I was dining with my father when I was obliged to go out, I turned round and said, "Papa, see you don't eat my fish!" Well, fathers may not, but Gurus?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, I don't eat your fish. I have oceans of fish at my disposal and have no need to consume your little sprats. It is Messers H.F. (hostile forces) who do that — the Dasyus or robbers. You display your fine new pen-knife and they say, "Ah! he is fond of his fine new pen-knife, is he? We'll show him!" and they filch it at the first opportunity.

MYSELF: Do tell us how the Supermind will make us great sadhaks overnight. We are hanging all our hopes on its "tail", which, you said, is descending.

SRI AUROBINDO: If you expect to become supramental overnight, you are confoundedly mistaken. The tail will keep the H.F. at a respectful distance and flap at you until you consent to do things in a reasonable time instead of taking 200 centuries over such a step as you seem to want to do just now. More than that I refuse to say. What is a reasonable time in the supramental view of things I leave you to discover.

MYSELF: Your Overmental Force seems to have utterly failed in cases of people like us. Where then is the chance of this Mr. Supramental who is only a step higher?

SRI AUROBINDO: Overmind is obliged to respect the freedom of the individual — including his freedom to be perverse, stupid, recalcitrant and slow. Supermind is not merely a step higher than Overmind — it is beyond the line, that is a different consciousness and power beyond the mental limit.

MYSELF: Please don't think of what India is going to do with her Independence. Give her that first, and then

let her decide her fate for herself. Independence anyhow — your Supermind will do the rest.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are a most irrational creature. I have been trying to logicise and intellectualise you, but it seems in vain. Have I not told you that the independence is all arranged for and will evolve itself all right? Then what's the use of my bothering about that any longer? It's what she will do with her independence that is not arranged for — and so it is that about which I have to bother. To drag in the Supermind by the tail here is perfectly irrelevant. We have been talking all the time on an altogether infra-supramental basis — down down low in the intellect with an occasional illumined intuitive or overmental flash here and there. Be faithful to the medium, if you please. If you do not become perfectly and luminously logical and rational, how can you hope to become a candidate for the next higher stage even? Be a little practical and reasonable.

19. 9. 35

MYSELF: But when did I tell you, Sir, that I expect to become *supramental* overnight? Good Gracious! Don't I realise that being an ass myself, it is not in my power to do so, — nor do I conjure up any such phantasms of hope to cross the 'Ass's Bridge'?

SRI AUROBINDO: You said "overnight", sir, "overnight". It was a logical inference from your desire to become a great sadhak overnight. In this remarkable correspondence I am not using intuition — I am proceeding strictly by mental (not supramental) reason and logic. A "great sadhak" in the supramental Yoga means a supramental — or ought to according to all rules of logic.

Asses seldom realise that. If they see a thistle on the other side, they try at once to go after it — so here again your logic fails.

MYSELF: You have admitted your failure in intellec-

tualising me; now I am waiting to hear at any time, the admission that all your attempts to make me a yogi seem to be in vain !

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps that is because for the sheer fun of it I tried the impossible, intending not to succeed — because if you had really become luminously intellectual and rational, why you would have been so utterly surprised at yourself that you would have sat down open-mouthed on the way and never moved a step farther.

MYSELF: From all my fulminations, please don't understand that I am craving for the Supermind or the Absolute. I just want an inner calm and remain unshaken like Lord Shiva himself, in all circumstances.

SRI AUROBINDO: And yet you say you are not after the Absolute !!!

MYSELF: About the Supermind, I only wanted to know how this gentleman is going to help us. Minimising our depressions ? Breaking our difficulties ? Keeping off the waves of the subconscious ? etc., etc. ?

SRI AUROBINDO: He can do any or all of these things. But we can leave him to fix his programme after he has got on his feet (subsequent to the bump of the descent) and has had time to look about him.

MYSELF: I know my nature too well to hope for any Supermind, Overmind or any other Mind — overnight. Still you say that I am “an irrational, illogical, impractical creature” !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but you talked of becoming a great sadhak (if not supramental) overnight. So unless you withdraw that —

MYSELF: Some people say that the Supermind will establish a direct connection with the Psychic and spur it to come to the front quicker.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it can do that, but it is not bound to do that only and take no other way.

MYSELF: When I said apropos of India's independence, that your Supermind will do the rest, I only meant

that before India has any chance of becoming free, the Supermind will descend and guide India's destiny.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know it will do that? It may simply look on, twist its moustache and say "Ahem" !

MYSELF: I would like to report that my head is very heavy, painful, body feverish and a painful boil in the nose.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is it the result of your mind bumble-beeing too much around the tail of the Supramental ?

MYSELF: I send you a photograph of mine along with the note-book. What do you think of it, Sir ? — A Mussolini gone morbid ? Anyhow it looks as if you have at last succeeded in putting some intellect in this brain-box of mine !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good heavens, what a gigantic forehead they have given you ! The Himalaya and the Atlantic in one mighty brow ! also, with the weird supramental light upon it ! Well, well, you ought to be able to cross the Ass's bridge with that. Or do you think the bridge will break down under its weight ?

20. 9. 35

MYSELF: But really, Sir, I never expected you to take my "overnight" so literally. As a matter of fact I did not mean anything precise and particular. You could have allowed for a little exuberance in metaphor, surely !

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't understand your deep expressions — you did not mean that it would happen rapidly and suddenly ? "Overnight" in English means that, — if you had some extraordinary supramental meaning (beyond the mental and out of the human time-sense) in your mind, it is a different matter, and then I express my awe-struck, heart-felt, flabbergasted regrets, pleading only as excuse to my inability to grasp such a deep and novel use of the language. May I ask, very humbly, what

you did mean, if not a sudden and rapid development into great sadhaks ?

MYSELF: Is it because you use only the mental ? Suppose we use your expression "Very near the tail of the Supramental" in our human time-sense ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I supposed that you would take it as a metaphor or as anyone reading English in the ordinary way, would do. No need of a superhuman time-sense or timeless sense to interpret the phrase, although it seems it is needed in order to understand your "overnight".

MYSELF: I had a temperature of 100° all day. I fear the Supramental gave me some severe lashes with his tail ! Arjava threatens that people will lose all faith in doctors unless I cure myself quickly.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. You are simply "not well" — the reason you as a doctor ought to discover. Unless you have committed a secret sin (of one kind or another) and the temperature is a foretaste of the heat hereafter. But that also is for you to see.

21. 9. 35

MYSELF: By that cursed phrase, "being a great sadhak overnight", as I said, I did not mean anything precise. There might have been something *in the subconscious*, perhaps an idea about X being a great sadhak.

SRI AUROBINDO: There you go again ! "Great sadhaks", "advanced sadhaks", "big sadhaks", like X, Y and Z ? When shall I hear the last of these ego-building phrases which I have protested against times without number ? And you object to being beaten !

MYSELF: I regret to find that this phrase has led to so much froth. If you take such things seriously you will find many occasions for beating me and one day in sheer despondency you might utter, "Useless ! useless ! All pains, all efforts in vain, in vain !"

SRI AUROBINDO: It looks like it ! "Vanity of vanities,

all is vanity and vexation of spirit," saith the Preacher ! I fear all Preachers have to come to that in the end — especially the vanity of correspondence.

MYSELF: What 'secret sin' you insinuated ? Joke or jest ? Well, a few days ago I cooked a little *khichuri*¹ here, but that is hardly a sin !

SRI AUROBINDO: That's all ? Only "a little *khichuri*" ? Umph ! The transformation seems to have begun already.

MYSELF: I am much tempted to quote to you a very fragmentary touching picture of your brother Monomohan. ...If any part of you remained human, you would have shed two drops of tears on reading it. But there seems to be some similarity between you and him as regards charming the students by an overwhelming personality.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not even a fragment of a drop ! Monomohan had a personality, but it was neither overwhelming nor sweetly pathetic. So even with this piece of honeyed rhetoric the tears refuse to rise.

25. 9. 35

MYSELF: I understand your protesting against "great" or "big" sadhaks; but why against "advanced" sadhaks ? It is a fact that some are more advanced than others.

SRI AUROBINDO: Advanced indeed ! Pshaw ! Because one is 3 inches ahead of another, you must make classes of advanced and non-advanced ? Advanced has the same puffing egoistic resonance as "great" or "big". It leads to all sorts of stupidities, rajasic self-appreciating egoism in some, tamasic self-depreciating egoism in others, round-eyed wonderings why X an advanced sadhak, one 3 inches ahead of Y, should stumble, tumble or fumble while Y, 3 inches behind X, still plods heavily and steadily on, etc., etc. Why sir, the very idea in X that he is an advanced sadhak (like the Pharisee "I thank thee, O Lord, that I am not as other unadvanced disciples") would

¹ A special dish prepared from rice and lentils.

be enough to make him fumble, stumble and tumble. So no more of that, sir, no more of that.

26. 9. 35

MYSELF: T says I leave the smell of medicine in the lap of the Mother which she has to breathe everyday. Perhaps I smell of that since I come straight from the Hospital. If it is nauseating to the Mother and others, I think I should change before coming to Pranam.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother smelt the hospital fragrance in you but she does not mind at all, it does not disturb her. As for others, well I leave it to you. Some are pernickety, some are not, but I don't know if any others go into the first category.

27. 9. 35

MYSELF: S's abrasion is following quite a normal course. The wound is perfectly clean and healthy. He wants it to take a speedy, supernormal course, but we have no means to do that; it is your business.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps S has doubts about what the Doctors may be doing with him, just as you have doubts about what the Divine may be doing with him — hence some nervousness. Better or worse? Where the deuce is the progress? When am I going to be healed? After centuries?

1. 10. 35

MYSELF: Absolutely in the physical consciousness! Don't find any trace of the psychic anywhere, Sir! Are you handling the blessed subconscious physical or what?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am handling the handle. Sticky! If you are absolutely in the physical consciousness so much the better. It shows you are on the way. If you were in your uproarious mental or tragic vital then there would

be little chance for the psychic to emerge. But now that you are in the physical, there is some prospect of your finishing the circle M. V. Ph. Afterwards possibly there will be a chance for the line Ps. HC. S. Rejoice !

2. 10. 35

MYSELF: What are these abbreviations — Ps. HC. S. ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Psychic — Higher Consciousness — Supramental.

MYSELF: You are trying to adopt shorthand now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course ! what to do ? Shorthand lessens the labour of the writer, even if it increases that of the reader. Besides, the attempt to find out what the abbs. mean should stimulate your intuition and sharpen your intelligence.

MYSELF: I told you I am feeling lazy, have no aspiration, no inclination to write poetry. Isn't it a drop into the physical ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that's the joker — physical consciousness.

MYSELF: And this, you say, is the better condition ? Why, this is almost next to inconscience.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, where did I say that ? Of course it is.

MYSELF: I don't know how the psychic is going to emerge from the physical consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it's the bottom of the first curve, so logically the next thing is to make an upward tangent and get into the second curve.

MYSELF: Suppose one finishes the circle M. V. Ph. it can go round again before one is shifted to the starting of the other line.

SRI AUROBINDO: That would be very clever but it is not usually done except by people with big egos. Yours is no doubt a well-developed chubby chap but it is not a giant.

3. 10. 35

MYSELF: Again, about the Intuition! You speak of keeping oneself sufficiently open to get the intuition. If I keep myself open and intuition favours me, how shall I know that it is the true thing?

SRI AUROBINDO: Practise and learn, learn and practise. When you have had a few thousand intuitions you can get the knack — for there is a recognizable difference between the true ones and the imitations or half-ones.

MYSELF: In one or two cases my off-hand diagnosis was correct. But how far can I take it as an intuition?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on how it came, what was the stuff of the perception and the light in it and whether it bobbed up as one among potentials though dominant or seized you as an inevitable dead cert. Also whether it was a pure intuition or a mixed mental. Difficult, isn't it?

MYSELF: About how to develop it, I won't ask you — though it would enlighten us; but I suppose you will develop it some day, though a big condition of 'sufficiently open' overhangs. Yes, everything one can have if one is 'sufficiently open', but there's the rub, for one isn't and can't!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, instead of letting your Man of Sorrows sob and grumble all the lachrymose time, you should labour manfully to enlarge the opening.

4. 10. 35

MYSELF: Is there any truth behind animal sacrifice to Kali?

SRI AUROBINDO: If animal sacrifices are to be made they may just as well be made to Kali as to one's stomach — the Europeans who object to it have no *locus standi*.

MYSELF: What about the sacrifice of harmless animals to Kali ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Useless and therefore inadvisable. External sacrifices of this kind have no longer any meaning — as so many saints have said, sacrifice ego, anger, lust etc. to Kali, not goats or cocks.

How does the Divine benefit by it ? Very hungry, I suppose — would like a nice goat-chop ?

MYSELF: I wonder if you know that some Sharma has gone on hunger-strike to stop the sacrifices at Calcutta. Tagore supports him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, I know. But he objects to animal sacrifice; why does he make a goat offering of himself to Kali ? Is human sacrifice better than animal sacrifice ?

MYSELF: The argument is: what does the loss of one life matter if by it other lives can be saved ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I know the South African saying "How glorious if the whole world were to destroy itself to save the life of a single mosquito." I used always to wonder what would become of the poor mosquito if the world were destroyed ? It seemed to my poor common sense that it would perish also in the glorious holocaust.

MYSELF: ...While on the subject of War, I suppose you are watching with great apprehension, the war-clouds that are gathering.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, I am not trembling, but I agree that it is a beastly affair.

5. 10. 35

MYSELF: D. R. is running a temperature. Etiology is obscure; I presume it may be yogic.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! D. R. is not Yogic enough to have a Yogic fever.

MYSELF: I have become awfully irritated these last two days. Is it due to your exposition of the "chubby chap" ?

SRI AUROBINDO: May be. Ego irritated at its own chubbiness ? Wants to be rough, rude and bossy, — a true he-man ?

8. 10. 35

MYSELF: D. R. is all right. No temperature. He wants to come to Pranam.

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose he can, *Doctore volante* (Doctor willing).

MYSELF: Please have a look at the *Calcutta Review* for a criticism by Adhar Das. I don't know if you have seen it already.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I have read all these sweet things from the sweet *adhar*.¹

MYSELF: I gather that he is favourably disposed to your philosophy. So much so that he has written a book on it.

SRI AUROBINDO: He was, without understanding much, before A butted in and gored him into bitterness.

MYSELF: People are longing to see the first batch of the supramental species from your great laboratory, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Go forward, go forward and show yourself.

MYSELF: Adhar Das also says, "An extravagant claim in as much as it gives a lie to logic and also to the lives and experiences of past seers." Well, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO:Well, well, but why repeat it in such a way that each "gives the lie" to the others ? Truly, this shocked reverence for the past is a wonderful and fearful thing ! After all, the Divine is infinite and the unrolling of the Truth may be an infinite process or at least, if not quite so much, yet with some room for new discovery and new statement, even perhaps new achievement, not a thing in a nutshell cracked and its contents exhausted once for all by the first seer or sage, while

¹ Lip.

the others must religiously crack the same nutshell all over again, each tremblingly fearful not to give the lie to the "past" seers or sages.

MYSELF: Adhar Das says, "Divinisation of the individual will be instrumental in the emergence of a new race". Is that what you mean by "Our Yoga is not for our sake but for the Divine" ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not exactly.

9. 10. 35

MYSELF: If "not exactly", what exactly then do you mean by "Our Yoga is not for our sake but for the Divine" ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I once wrote in my callow days "Our Yoga is not for ourselves but for humanity" that was in the *Bande Mataram* days. To get out of the hole self-created I had to explain that it was no longer for humanity, but for the Divine. The "not for ourselves" remained intact.

MYSELF: Dr. Becharlal is going home tomorrow, for a month. Please see that Messrs. H. F. may not entangle me into trouble.

SRI AUROBINDO: For one month you may make yourself like iron and look fierce.

MYSELF: A worker from Cycle House — Cassel (?) has conjunctivitis.

SRI AUROBINDO: Another of the dictionary ? I suppose you mean Keshavalu ?

10. 10. 35

MYSELF: Please cast a glance on the typed letters about Adhar Das. I suppose you wouldn't mind a copy being sent to him ? I won't, but if others do ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it is not meant for him. It is

only a bit of fun between ourselves.

12. 10. 35

MYSELF: My disgust is becoming more and more acute as regards poetry. I suppose the slightly lit-up channel has closed again. Things are pushing me towards medicine — an absolutely opposite pole! Where is your alchemist, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: Has taken opium probably and is seeing visions somewhere. Perhaps they will come out some day from your suddenly galvanised pen.

16. 10. 35

MYSELF: If I had been a predominantly sattwic man, you would have had much less trouble from me.

SRI AUROBINDO: No doubt. But you are not after all, a thief, debauchee, drunkard or gangster. You may say perhaps that if you had been you could have been a great saint also, violently sinning, violently repenting, violently sanctifying yourself? Perhaps that was the secret of St. Augustine and the others!

MYSELF: Can one say that in the evolution of consciousness sattwic people are more evolved than the others? Narrow logic, again?

SRI AUROBINDO: Um! somewhat! There are all sorts among the more evolved, among the less evolved there are many sattwic people also, mere good people who don't amount to much. One pats them on the back and goes farther. But don't twist this into meaning that I prefer the nasty bad ones. I don't; they give too much trouble. Only life, evolution, human character and things generally in this perplexing world are disconcertingly complex and can't be dismissed with a few simpler affirmations.

MYSELF: M says that his head seems to be better but he doesn't know if eruptions will come out again, if the

treatment is stopped. So he suggests you will be a better judge to say whether the disease is still inside or not.

SRI AUROBINDO: How am I to know? The inside of his head is opaque not transparent. So long as it does not come again from outside with a new sowing!

19. 10. 35

MYSELF: About sacrifice and the rest, I keep silent to-night, since a cyclone is feared.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am ready for it, but it has not arrived up till now — 1 a.m.

MYSELF: I am trying hard to understand your *Life Divine*, like a dog at his bone. But at places I am at sea. Shall I take X or Y's help? Who is better?

SRI AUROBINDO: I know nothing of X's capacity for explaining philosophy. Y? Well, he has translated it like everything else. Z would be the best man, but he is probably too busy and too lazy.

N. B. Very secret these *obiter dicta*!

20. 10. 35

MYSELF: I wish I had known some of this business, but

Alas, cult or occult
Nothing do I know;
Blindly, blindly like an ass
Braying incessantly I go.

SRI AUROBINDO: What a beautiful poem! You wrote it yourself? It is in Dara's most modernist style.

21. 10. 35

MYSELF: About that poem, it is all my writing, Sir, and all rights reserved. These are glimpses of something turning up some day, even though the sky is cloudy now.

Micawberism, par excellence !

SRI AUROBINDO: Nirod Micawber (Talukdar no more). That is a good idea.

MYSELF: I saw M going about with bare clothing. Not good for asthma.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce is bare clothing ? I have heard only of a bare body etc. Your Aeschylean expressions are sometimes very puzzling.

MYSELF: About the *Life Divine* class I would have loved to read with Z, but his Purusha-like bearing scares me. You know he refused even to take up and only by the Mother's order he did it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Take up what ? You have already asked him for the L.D. and been sent banging ? Or is it something else indicated by an Aeschylean ellipsis ?

MYSELF: I asked also R but he has no time. Hence those two, thinking that they understand at least better than I.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which two, Great Heavens, O Aeschylus ? R & Z ? Or X & Y ? I suppose the latter. And the elliptical "Hence those two"=Hence I asked about those two ? I shall become quite a skilful Aeschylean scholar at this rate.

MYSELF: I shall have to fall back on myself for *The Life Divine*.

SRI AUROBINDO: You might try. Read an unintelligible para from the L.D., then sit in vacant meditation and see what comes from the intuitive Gods. They will probably play jokes with you, but what does it matter ? One learns by one's errors and marches to success through one's failures.

22. 10. 35

MYSELF: But do you mean that this method can really do something ? I understand that you wrote many things in that way, but people also say that Gods — no, God-

desses used to come and tell you the meaning of the Vedas.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was a joke. But all the same that is the way things are supposed to come. When the mind becomes decently quiet, an intuition perfect or imperfect is supposed to come hopping along and jump in and look round the place. Of course, it is not the only way.

People tell a stupendous amount of rubbish. I wrote everything I have written since 1909 in that way, i.e. out of or rather through a silent mind, and not only a silent mind but a silent consciousness. But Gods and Goddesses had nothing to do with the matter.

MYSELF: But no Goddesses for poor folks like us; they can only cut jokes, play pranks or tease our tails, that's all.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if they tease your tail sufficiently, might not a poem be the result?

MYSELF: Jaswant says that the dream about the silver coins that I saw obviously means spiritual wealth. Have I got it? When? Where?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is an offer of these things to you, probably from some tail-teasing God or Goddess.

MYSELF: S is suffering from neuralgia, no doubt but 2 ry to the joint trouble.

SRI AUROBINDO: This is worse than Aeschylus. Is it an Egyptian hieroglyph? English? Bengali? Shorthand?

MYSELF: I intend to give him salicilate, iodine or arsenic one after the other.

SRI AUROBINDO: It looks like throwing stones at a dog in the hope that one of them will hit him.

MYSELF: A screen examination is advisable. These things are intractable and there is a hereditary taint.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, you can do the screen exam, but if there is any scream on the screen, be discreet and let us know first before S is informed. After we know what's the matter, can fix medicine.

23. 10. 35

MYSELF: Anyhow, joke or no joke, I will try the method suggested by you for reading *The Life Divine*. But the trouble is that the mind finds it difficult to believe that vacancy can be filled up all of a sudden without any kind of thinking.

SRI AUROBINDO: The idea that you are shaping the thoughts or fitting them together is an egoistic delusion. They are doing it themselves, or Nature is doing it for you, only under a certain compulsion; you have to beat her often in order to make her do it and the beating is not always successful. But the mind or nature or mental energy — whatever you like to call it, does this in a certain way and carries on with a certain order of thoughts, — haphazard intelligentialities (excuse the barbarism) or asininites, rigidly ordered or imperfectly ordered intellectualities, logical sequences and logical inconsequences, etc., etc. How the devil is an intuition to get in in the midst of that waltzing and colliding crowd? It does sometimes, — in some minds often intuitions do come in, but immediately the ordinary thoughts surround it and eat it up alive, and then with some fragment of the murdered intuition shining through their non-intuitive stomachs they look up smiling at you and say, "I am intuition, sir." But they are only intellect, intelligence or ordinary thought with part of a dismembered and therefore misleading intuition inside them. Now in a vacant mind, vacant but not inert (that is important) intuitions have a chance of getting in alive and whole. But don't run away with the idea that all that comes into an empty mind even a clear or luminous empty mind, will be intuitive....

MYSELF: You have seen, I think, P's poem. Its very first line was hovering over my mind — I let it go, not thinking much of it, but he has obviously caught it! Many times similar instances have occurred. How is one to explain this?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no difficulty about explaining. You are as naïve and ignorant as a new-born lamb. That is the way things come, only one does not notice. Thoughts, ideas, happy inventions etc., etc., are always wandering about (in thought-waves or otherwise) seeking a mind that may embody them. One mind takes, looks, rejects — another takes, looks, accepts. Two different minds catch the same thought-form or thought-wave, but the mental activities being different make different results out of them. Or it comes to one and he does nothing, then it walks off, saying 'O this unready animal!' and goes to another who promptly annexes it and it settles into expression with a joyous bubble of inspiration, illumination or enthusiasm of original discovery or creation and the recipient cries proudly, "I, I have done this." Ego, sir! ego! You are the recipient, the conditioning medium, if you like — nothing more.

24. 10. 35

MYSELF: Your yesterday's long letter has delighted me much. The burden of it seems to be that we have to take everything on trust since we lack the experience, and so long as the experiences don't come what can we do but go on teasing you with our questions? And you well know,

We are not worshippers of you
But your immortal letter!
We do not worship the dumb Blue
But his resplendent star
Which shines and all the night shines
In the dark caves of our mines.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! I hope you don't imagine that is a rhyme?

MYSELF: [I had told the Furniture Dept. that if a table was lying about I would like to have it. I had mentioned this in my note-book to Sri Aurobindo.]

What about my table ? Forgotten ? Ellipsis ?

Out of the silence

What is the word that be

About my cane-table, Sir ?

Either can I take with surrender.

SRI AUROBINDO: Forgot both the cane and the table. You can have, if it is lying about.

Good Lord ! another ! If you rhyme Sir and surrender, you don't deserve a table but only a cane and plenty of it.

MYSELF: Rambhai complains of severe pain in the abdomen, due to constipation. Had to give a dose of castor oil.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rambhai is in Gujerat, if you please. If you are administering doses of castor oil to his abdomen direct from here, you must be a *siddha* Fascist Yogi. But perhaps you mean Ramkumar ? Or whom do you mean ? Is it — ?

25. 10. 35

MYSELF: You wrote to S that R doesn't believe in allopathy at all, and considers it almost equal to quackery. Can a man apparently with some common sense have such insensible notions ?

SRI AUROBINDO: But there are and have been plenty with sense who have held that view about allopathy (and homeopathy also and all medicine). What about Molière ? A man of sense, if ever there was one !

26. 10. 35

MYSELF: But there are chances of getting drawn into quagmires by any blessed idea; how is one to pick out the right intuition ?

SRI AUROBINDO: *Experientia docet* — experience is the doctor. Also the habit of intuitivising if it is honestly

done develops a discrimination that begins to know how to sort the sheep from the goats or the demis and semis and semi-demis from the real thing. By honestly I mean without ego or *parti pris*.

28. 10. 35

MYSELF: I understand that Intuition will be one of the outstanding features of your Supramental creation; we will have to shut the eyes and come off with an illumined intuition ! The result will be epoch-making discoveries, inventions, etc., etc. By Jove ! What a grand period it will be !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, no ! At least not till you live in the gnostic Intuition as your ordinary consciousness. So long as you are only receiving all sorts of things from everywhere, you will have to be on the *qui vive* to see that you don't make a pseudo-intuitive fool of yourself.

30. 10. 35

MYSELF: I don't know what to do with R. K. There is virtually no improvement of his trachoma. Today he says he has great pain in right pain and wants to be reported.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are certainly a born supramental. "To have great pain in right pain" is of a supramental depth.

31. 10. 35

MYSELF: But can you tell us what the experience of the Self was like ? Was it by any chance like the one you speak of in your Uttara Para Speech — the Vasudeva experience ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Great jumble — Mumble ! What has

Vasudeva to do with it ? Vasudeva is a name of Krishna, and in the Uttara para I was speaking of Krishna, if you please.

MYSELF: By the Self, I suppose, you mean the individual Self !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, no. I mean the Self, sir, the Self, the Adwaita, Vedantic, Shankara Self. Atman, Atman ! A thing I knew nothing about, never bargained for, didn't understand either.

1. 11. 35

MYSELF: There was a small gale over the servant business. When his fault was shown he went on arguing with me with an insolent attitude which I couldn't bear.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not ? He is using the freedom of his reason and asserting his sovietic equality with you his "comrade" and fellow human. Ask H.¹

MYSELF: Really Sir, your Karma Yoga has lost all charm for me. To go on all the time driving a fellow, rebuking him, is an unaesthetic business; besides, one can't pour out the venom as one doesn't know the language. But you harp on your dictum that all this is necessary for a great transformation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Exceedingly good discipline for you.

MYSELF: Methinks you are making just a little too much of Yogic Force. Its potency as regards matters spiritual is undeniable, but for artistic or intellectual things one can't be so sure about its effectiveness. Take Dilip's case; one could very well say: "Why give credit to the Force ? Had he been as assiduous, sincere etc. elsewhere, he would have done just the same."

SRI AUROBINDO: Will you explain to me how Dilip who could not write a single good poem and had no power over rhythm and metre before he came here, suddenly, not after long "assiduous efforts" blossomed into a poet,

¹ A former disciple with communistic leanings.

rhythmist and metrist after he came here? Why was Tagore dumbfounded by the "lame man throwing away his crutches" and running freely and surely on the paths of rhythm? Why was it that I who never understood or cared for painting, suddenly in a single hour by an opening of vision got the eye to see and the mind of understanding about colour, line and design? How was it that I who was unable to understand and follow a metaphysical argument and whom a page of Kant or Hegel or Hume or even Berkeley left either dazed and uncomprehending and fatigued or totally uninterested because I could not fathom or follow, suddenly began writing pages of the stuff as soon as I started the *Arya* and am now reputed to be a great philosopher? How is it that at a time when I felt it difficult to produce more than a paragraph of prose from time to time and more than a mere poem, short and laboured, perhaps one in two months, suddenly after concentrating and practising Pranayama daily began to write pages and pages in a single day and kept sufficient faculty to edit a big daily paper and afterwards to write 60 pages of philosophy every month? Kindly reflect a little and don't talk facile nonsense.

2. 11. 35

MYSELF: You say that my 'grey matter does not easily open and it closes up also too easily' but where is 'the automatic flow' to which it can accommodate itself, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: The automatic flow would be there but for the grey matter being adverse and perverse.

MYSELF: I find that if a current has opened up a little, a blessed counter-current of depression, dissatisfaction comes down and sweeps me away.

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly. That's its way of closing up. The three Ds seem to be your grey matter's forte — doubt, depression, dissatisfaction. If it were not for them when something came you would get the Ananda of creation

and things would move a little.

MYSELF: If you advise me that one has to go on sitting and racking one's brain — inspiration or no inspiration and then only the grey matter can open up, I'll say it is not a very royal road that you show me.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think the inspiration usually comes in that way ! It is better to put yourself in receptive attitude and let it come. If it doesn't come, try, try again but no need to sweat and swear and writhe.

MYSELF: Some are of the opinion that one shouldn't try to force the inspiration.

SRI AUROBINDO: It can't be forced but it can be invited.

MYSELF: About J's book — the tangle has become worse and I curse myself for being involved in it.

SRI AUROBINDO: "Cast your bread upon the waters and it shall return to you" — rather sodden !

MYSELF: On the whole I am reminded of Galsworthy's drama: *Skin-Game*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know it. But skin or no skin, it is a game all right though not an amusing one.

3. 11. 35

MYSELF: A yogi astrologer predicted that all my 'dark age' will pass away at the age of 32, and the 'gold age' will set in. That age has come but where is the gold ? !

SRI AUROBINDO: Glorious ! You must begin glittering at once — even if there are other things than gold that glitter. But are you through the wonderful year already ? and is it the age of 32 or the 32nd year ?

4. 11. 35

MYSELF: Can you tell me why X's friends kick him back for the good he has done to them ? Because he expects a return ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, partly for that. But only some are really grateful for benefits done except for the moment. A great many kick under the burden of an obligation. Human nature ! You know Vidyasagar's immortal saying on the subject, I suppose, "Why is he so furious against me ? আমি ত তার কোন উপকার করিনি ।"¹

MYSELF: Can you, by the way, summarise my case and put the points before my myopic eyes apart from the three Ds ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! don't expect me to be diagramming people all the time. Besides, your personalities are not clearly marked out like X's. Wait till they separate themselves to you in the Dance of Harmony.

A is complaining loudly of her stomach pains — can't even walk in her room etc. What are they ? A little medical light, please.

5. 11. 35

MYSELF: I think A will become all right by a few days' rest, stopping all activity — even walking.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps. But if it is moving kidney ? She can't remain a non-walking statue all her life.

MYSELF: Her yesterday's fever doesn't throw any light on the main issue. Any supramental light ?

SRI AUROBINDO: None. Supermind says, "O bother ! don't trouble me with that, yet "

6. 11. 35

MYSELF: I send you J's photo. But please don't mind the side show ! If you had seen me before you would have exclaimed: "This fellow has no scrap of a chance for Yoga !" But you will admit that I had health and vigour ! What do you say ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The general impression is martial and

¹ I have done no good turn to him.

pugilistic. To be recommended to the Negus for Gorahai or Gergolubi.

8. 11. 35

MYSELF: You will see from the letter what has happened. I am absolutely moribund and gasping; don't see the way. Cursing myself every minute.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that is rather excessive. It would be better to stop dying, gasping and cursing.

MYSELF: What have all these to do with Yoga? I'm sure I didn't come for them.

SRI AUROBINDO: It has nothing to do with Yoga. Usual human tangles, sir.

MYSELF: The Yoga of oblation, sacrifice and severe austerities would be better — no hankering for fame, name or meddling with others' affairs.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no such Yoga. That also is not Yoga.

MYSELF: After the novel-tangle I have lost all faith, confidence, hope.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good God! What a shipwreck in a tea cup! Kindly cultivate a sense of proportion. Learn the lessons of experience, ponder then in silence and do better next time — that would be more sensible.

12. 11. 35

MYSELF: How can I refuse the elixir? Only give it tangibly, concretely.

SRI AUROBINDO: A concrete elixir is your business, not mine — as you claim to be a scientist.

13. 11. 35

MYSELF: Again about the novel-tangle. X told J in your name — "All she did with regard to her novel was

because of egoism and her love of vital drama." J was very much upset by hearing it said in your name.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what you might call applied mathematics. I made a general statement which could cover the whole animal and human creation up to Mussolini and the Negus and avoided all mention of the novel. I added that since he had received an *amende honorable*, the matter might be dropped and peace declared.

14. 11. 35

MYSELF: No meal as yet, Sir. It is 9.30 p.m. No sleep, no rest. And still you express your surprise and grudge at a doctor being given a certificate!

SRI AUROBINDO: Poor doctors who give up rest and sleep and food, yet remain all unwept, unhonoured and unsung. Never mind! Perhaps in heaven they will have a big address given them one mile long and signed by all the angels — cherubin and seraphim together.

17. 11. 35

MYSELF: I don't agree with R when he says that hiccup will have some good effect on the intestine.

SRI AUROBINDO: !!!

19. 11. 35

MYSELF: By 'lime juice', I meant orange juice — R would call it 'sweet lime juice', not orange juice which is supposed to be different.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perplexing! Why should juice of oranges be called 'sweet lime juice'? I suppose in that case juice of sweet limes should be called orange juice? Vice versa? Mutual transmutation? or what? Orange is certainly supposed to be different from sweet lime and it is oranges and not sweet limes we are using. R seems

to live in a world of his over-mental construction which has nothing to do with this poor earth and common "humanity".

MYSELF: He adds that you come down to common human consciousness level and listen to these suggestions. He also says you have no time to go into higher consciousness to ascertain the validity of these statements.

SRI AUROBINDO: What an imbecile ! As if one could not know about orange juice and its effects without shooting up into the Supermind. Does he think his extraordinary theories are supramental ?

21. 11. 35

MYSELF: Now all symptoms are subsiding. Pt. will soon become all right.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce is pt., O Aeschylus ?

MYSELF: What about R's subtle suggestion to take up this case ?

SRI AUROBINDO: A subtle silence.

22. 11. 35

MYSELF: R gave S spinach soup with a very strong dose of pepper and ginger, which was burning his throat.

SRI AUROBINDO: ...fancy soup of spinach — S would have sailed on it to Paradise. But R's syllogism was simple. Greens are good for health. Spinach is a powerful green. So spinach soup must be powerfully good for S's health. You see how logic can mislead !

25. 11. 35

MYSELF: Well, Sir, has your brand new formula worked out well ? Has anything descended ? From my own experience I am unable to say anything whatsoever.

SRI AUROBINDO: My formula is working out rapidly, but it has nothing to do with any Darshan descent. It is

my private and particular descent, if you like, and that's enough for me at present. The tail of the Supermind is descending, descending, descending. It is only the tail at present, but where the tail can pass, the rest will follow.

MYSELF: After so much expectation everything seemed to me so quiet, homely and comely. It seems as if the Darshan passed away long ago.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quiet was all I wanted — there were many alarms and excursions. Just before that it looked as if the 24th would be a day of mud, whirlpools and tempests (in certain quarters of course). However all quieted down by magic and everything was peaceful, peaceful.

MYSELF: I hope others felt the Force, the Descent. Some say there was a great descent; others say that nothing came down.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do they know, either of them? Personal experience? It was a personal descent or a personal non-descent. No General de Bruno yet.

MYSELF: Some say there was so much resistance that, "Sri Aurobindo could not do much in spite of himself."

SRI AUROBINDO: Didn't try, sir, so that's bosh. The attempt to bring a great general descent having only produced a great ascent of subconscient mud, I had given up that, as I already told you. At present, I am only busy with transformation of overmind (down to the subconscient) into supermind. When that is over, I shall see if I can beat everyone with the tail of the supermind or not. At present I am trying to prevent people from making hysterical, subconscient asses of themselves so that I may not be too much disturbed in my operations — not yet with too much success.

28. 11. 35

MYSELF: J is being lactated and adrenalised with some good effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Lactate away then.

MYSELF: I am wallowing again in the morass of the
3 Ds, now that I am free from my attendance on S.

SRI AUROBINDO: Stand up, man, and don't wallow !
Stand up and fix your third eye on the invisibly descend-
ing Tail of the Supramental.

MYSELF: If I could apply myself to some pursuits that
would be obligatory !

SRI AUROBINDO: How to make them obligatory unless
you do something which will take you to jail !

MYSELF: Interest in poetry, reading has dwindled, and
now I'm on the way to be a "subconscient ass".

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not become a conscious one ?

4. 12. 35

MYSELF: Prasanna is better in every respect. But how
am I to impress upon her that trachoma is a nasty busi-
ness, that it takes a long time to cure completely ?

SRI AUROBINDO: She does not care about all that. Her
point of view is that the doctor is there to cure her and
why doesn't he do it ? Very careless and callous of him.
It is something like the attitude of many to us and our
Yogic force.

MYSELF: I intend to try a new medicine for her eyes,
brushing the lids with sodium chlor. powder which is sup-
posed to give good results. But it is rather painful. She
might complain of the excruciating pain.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! She will make a worse
noise than Hercules on the shirt of Nessus !

MYSELF: If you give us courage, we may venture.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not possible. Prasanna will become
more than *aprasanna*,¹ she will become *abasanna*² and
do *dharna*.³ Won't do.

¹ Displeased.

² Depressed or despondent.

³ Hunger strike.

MYSELF: I know nothing about N's fever. He swept in today and said he is feverish. Temperature was normal, it can't be due to T. B. suggestion, for he doesn't know what T. B. is.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is writing very aghast notes and demanding an explanation from me of his perilous condition — so I thought it better to refer the matter to the medical authorities.

MYSELF: We have heard that you have done tremendous feats of memory like Vivekananda.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hallo !!

5. 12. 35

MYSELF: I asked R about S's screen examination. He said he would write to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is sardonically permissive — displeased with S's bull-like unmanageableness and says he does not care whether he is rayed or remains rayless all his life.

MYSELF: I am now caught up in a triangle of confusion: one side of the triangle is story writing, another is poetry and the base — concentration, meditation, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Make it a triangle of harmony.

MYSELF: My main idea is to attempt to develop a style by constant practice, and to open up my grey matter if possible, though I doubt it very much. Again doubt ! Yes, Sir, doubt at every blessed nook and corner.

SRI AUROBINDO: You must have been St. Thomas in a past life, also Hamlet, an Academic philosopher, and several other things.

MYSELF: As regards poetry, there again I am invaded by hazy ideas for 2 or 3 compositions and many lines seem to peep out.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is the meaning of this "seem" ? Do they peep or do they not peep ?

MYSELF: But they seem more bent on tantalising me

than meaning anything serious, because as soon as I sit down to transcribe them, they evaporate like ether or camphor.

SRI AUROBINDO: What do you mean? Why should you sit down to transcribe them? Keep hold of the lines and expressions by the nose as soon as they peep out, jump on a piece of paper and dash them down for prospective immortality.

MYSELF: It appears so easy to catch all these amorphous beauties and put them into morphological Grecian statues!

SRI AUROBINDO: Why amorphous, if they are lines and expressions — lines and expressions are either morphous or they don't exist. Explain yourself please.

The one thing you have not written is how the third side of the triangle manifests its activity. You say, all are active together?

MYSELF: Can you solve this eternal disharmony and is there any possibility of harmony?

SRI AUROBINDO: Every possibility if you will cease to Hamletise and go straight or go bald-headed for the thing to be done when there is a chance.

MYSELF: If poets have powerfully active sex-glands, I suppose I can be also called a poet, at any rate an embryonic one! Q. E. D. Logic, Sir! n'est-ce pas?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir — ce n'est pas ça. You are illegitimately connecting two disconnected syllogisms. 1st syllogism — the poets are sex-gland active, Nirod is a poet, therefore Nirod is sex-gland active. 2nd syllogism — all sex-gland actives are poets, Nirod is sex-gland active therefore Nirod is a poet. The second proposition does not follow from the first as you seem illogically to think. All poets may be sex-gland active, but it does not follow that all sex-gland actives are poets. So don't start building an epic on your sex-glands, please.

MYSELF: One begins with the morphous lines hoping that the amorphous chaos will sweep in ecstatically and help me build a splendidly original cosmos, and what do I find? Either they elude me or what comes is something fictitious and commonplace.

SRI AUROBINDO: That's another matter. It's like dreams in which one gets splendid lines that put Shakespeare into the shade and one wakes up and enthusiastically jots them down, it turns out to be —

“O you damned goose, where are you going
While the river is flowing, flowing, flowing?” and things like that.

MYSELF: Already words and lines of four or five poems in halves and quarters are lying in a comatose condition, without any hope of resurrection.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well — all that shows you are a poet in the making with hundreds of poems in you also in the making, very much so. The mountains in labour, you know — what?

MYSELF: The only bit of time available to me for writing poetry is about 1 to 1½ hours at night; and what can one write in that little time?

SRI AUROBINDO: Lucky man! Ample time, sir, ample time, both to realise the Brahman and to write another Iliad or Nirodiad.

Good Lord! What can one write in 1 or 1½ hours? If I could only get that time for immortal productions everyday! Why in another three years Savitri and Ilion and I don't know how much more would be all rewritten, finished, resplendently complete.

MYSELF: Please don't ask me to fix the consciousness high while writing, for that is impossible. This is the difficulty I've been facing all along: one part bounding for concentration, another plunging into literature. How can

I go straight or bald-headed ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but what I mean is to stop this profitless debate in your stomach and do what you have to do. When you are moved to concentrate, concentrate — when you are moved to cosmicise chaos, cosmicise away. And don't waste time in remorse for having done either. Remorse is a damned useless affair, very depressing, defertilising etc. Even if you murder somebody or, what is worse, write lines which amount to a murder of the Muse, remorse is out of place. In the first case, the useful thing to do is to bury the corpse and in the second to seek the capacious arms of the W.P.B. for your misdeed or try to cover it up by doing better.

MYSELF: I have given you my time-table so that you may concentrate on me at the exact time. I hope the mathematical figures won't give you a shock !

SRI AUROBINDO: No fear. Mathematics are more likely to send me to sleep than give a shock.

7. 12. 35

MYSELF: J says that the Mother reveals to him all her workings. Must be wonderful if it is a fact.

SRI AUROBINDO: The usual delusion ! Voices, voices — the Mother in a confidential mood on the 7th storey !

A very big "if".

MYSELF: What flattering phrases you use, Sir ! "Perfective immortality", "hundreds of poems in the making, very much so" etc., etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rather startled by this phrase. Can't find it, but don't believe it is correct reading.

MYSELF: X wants to meet the Mother in the vital.

SRI AUROBINDO: Bejabbus !

R wants S's stove, segri (?)¹ and coals, kerosene, spirit, cocoa and barley to be removed from his room bodily and summarily. We don't know how to organise this raid.

¹ An oven.

Mother suggests that you might undertake it, the things to be distributed afterwards to the proper quarters. Ready for the heroic deed ? As for S, you can tell him "Doctor's orders !"

8. 12. 35

MYSELF: I have been plodding at a poem and now it is ready. So slow and laborious I am as a poet !

SRI AUROBINDO: What of that ? The result is all right. Harin used to write ten or twelve poems in a day or any number more. It takes me usually a day or two days to write and perfect one or three days even, or if very inspired I get two short ones out, and have thereafter to revise the next day. Another poet will be like Virgil writing nine lines a day and spending all the rest of his time polishing and polishing. A fourth will be like Manmohan, as I knew him, setting down half lines and fragments and taking 2 weeks or 2 months to put them into shape. The time does not matter, getting it done and the quality alone matter. So forge ahead and don't be discouraged by the prodigious rapidity of Nishikanta.

MYSELF: Here is a joint effort — some stanzas by myself, some by Nishikanta. Perhaps they fail as a whole ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is certainly a little difficult to keep them together, especially as Nishikanta's stanzas are strong and fiery and yours are delicate and plaintive. It is like a strong robustious fellow and a delicate slender one walking in a leash — they don't quite coalesce.

9. 12. 35

MYSELF: Nishikanta says that before writing or painting he bows down once before the Mother and you. If that is the magic, why, I will bow a hundred times, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on how you bow.

10. 12. 35

MYSELF: I hope you didn't fail to notice in Nishikanta's poem — "With profuse success, each pot of my every dot fulfils", word for word a translation by him of his Bengali line প্রতি বিন্দুর প্রতি আধার । Amal and I had a hearty laugh !

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it was a stroke of genius.

MYSELF: How to explain Nishikanta's miraculous feat ? He can't speak at all correctly in English, whereas he writes wonderful poetry !

SRI AUROBINDO: That has nothing to do with it. Speech and Poetry come from two quite different sources. Remember Goldsmith who wrote like an angel and talked like a parrot.

11. 12. 35

MYSELF: Are we taxing you too much by this occupation with our poetry ? If not, Nishikanta proposes to send you one poem a day. How would you like having the dish every night ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You can send it, I will look at the dish even if I don't devour it.

12. 12. 35

MYSELF: Something great, something big you have done, Sir. Will you kindly whisper ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am always doing something big, but never big enough — as yet.

MYSELF: Really, Sir, do tell us, if no objection.

SRI AUROBINDO: *Eh, what ?*

14. 12. 35

MYSELF: X says that I should support her at least on the basis of our old family relation.

SRI AUROBINDO: What a wonderful example of conduct for an Ashram ! It might serve in Arabia, Corsica or ancient Greece.

16. 12. 35

MYSELF: Everyone is doing something. I am only Tennysonning. Don't you feel pity for me, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not so much. If you were Browning, I might.

On second thought I keep the poem one day more.

18. 12. 35

MYSELF: I don't say that images, expressions may not sweep in, but one has to beat, beat and beat.

SRI AUROBINDO: Beat beating is not sweeping in.

MYSELF: Sometimes I have to work hard for a poem and at others it just comes in. Please explain.

SRI AUROBINDO: ...Beat beating is the sign of the mind at work like a God-forgotten blacksmith; the flow is the sign of the Muse pouring down things at her ease.

19. 12. 35

MYSELF: Two poems by Nishikanta enclosed; one old and the other new. But no use asking what the metre is. He has already begun learning it.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right, I think. Rereading it, I find it *très joli*. Congratulations to myself and Nishikanta with Nirod Talukdar in the middle.

MYSELF: Why bother about the metre, precise English

etc. ? They will come some day and in the meantime let him go on writing and learning by corrections, lessons, so on.

SRI AUROBINDO: That's all right — but I rub in a bit of metre and stresses so that his ear may learn — and yours also. Finding by the last poem there is a distinct progress — but where is the credit ? Corrected by Amal ? or only by your sole poetic self ?

MYSELF: By the way you didn't like my poem or you hesitate to call it mine because of so many corrections by Nishikanta ? Others say that it is very fine.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is very good; mixed parentage does not matter, so long as the offspring is beautiful.

MYSELF: How do you rhyme "life" and "cliff", "smile" and "will", "came" and "whim". Are they all whims ?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are called in English imperfect rhymes and can be freely but not too freely used. Only you have to understand the approximations and kinships of vowel sounds in English, otherwise, you will produce illegitimate children like "splendour" and "wonder" which is not a rhyme but an assonance.

20. 12. 35

MYSELF: I have no objection to being the *trait-d'union* in the 'mixed parentage', but for heaven's sake drop that appendage Talukdar, Sir. It is absolutely prosaic when I am trying to be poetic !

SRI AUROBINDO: All right. Only it is a pity — it was such a mouthful ! It may be prosaic in Bengali, but to one ignorant of the meaning it sounds as if you were a Roman emperor.

22. 12. 35

MYSELF: What about the poem you promised yesterday ? Golden chance, tomorrow being Sunday !

SRI AUROBINDO: What poem ? Sunday is not a golden chance because I have any amount of work to do on that day — wiping off arrears. People also often choose to forget that it is Sunday.

23. 12. 35

MYSELF: What poem, indeed ! Didn't you say you'd send me a poem showing the force of direct prayer ? You forget so easily !

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me. I said I will send *one day*. One day may mean some weeks, some months, or some years.

I will try to make it clear, but no time tonight as it is 4.40 a.m. already.

MYSELF: If all this doctoring is a question of mediumship I dance in rapture thinking that yogi-doctors have a vast possibility !

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, provided they do not entrench themselves in doubt and rigid materialistic orthodoxy.

MYSELF: I am thrown out of joint at two miracles, Sir: 1) R's treatment or yours; 2) Nishikanta's English poetry, though Madam Doubt still peeps from behind. Anyhow, no chance for me ! कर्ण¹ Sir ! What to do ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why out of joint ? It ought to strengthen your joints for the journey of Yoga. Not at all कर्ण, sir. Mind, sir, mind. Madam Doubt, sir, Madam Doubt ! Miss Material Intellectualism, sir ! Aunt Despondency, sir ! Uncle Self-distrust, sir ! Cousin Self-depreciation, sir ! The whole confounded family, sir !

MYSELF: A miracle really that R could raise a dead man ! I am flabbergasted really !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, and then ? It should raise you up, not cast you down.

Fate.

26. 12. 35

MYSELF: Still I am not sure that X's right side is free; but that can be ascertained by X-ray. R had that 'vicarious' impression to the last.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not pool results and say it was a vicarious monstrosity that produced a lung lesion in the middle left together with the right apex? Excuse levity—the temptation of a joke at doctors has always been too much for any lay resistance.

MYSELF: If a homeopath went by symptoms only, he would perhaps cut off the leaf but I am afraid the roots would flourish as strongly as ever.

SRI AUROBINDO: ...However, what bothers me about diagnosis is that if you put twenty doctors on a case they give twenty different diagnoses (in S's we had three doctors with three different theories of the illness) and such jokes as a doctor shouting "Appendix", opening up a man, finding illness neither of appendix nor volume nor chapter and cheerfully stitching him are extremely common. So if a layman's respect for allopathic pathology and diagnosis is deficient sometimes and R's sneers at doctors' diagnoses find occasionally an echo, — well, it is not altogether without "rational" cause.

MYSELF: A had a mild diarrhoea; his relatives made a great affair of it by caressing, fondling and surrounding him all the time!

SRI AUROBINDO: Killed with kindness?

28. 12. 35

MYSELF: Now about diagnosis, about which you have joked. Why take a muddle as an instance and ignore other cases? I should say that a mistaken diagnosis of the appendix, for example, is very rare.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good heavens! It happened in scores

and scores of cases when there was the appendicitis mania among doctors in France — and they have other manias also.

MYSELF: Why ignore wonderful things due to thousands of right diagnoses and let sporadic cases of error loom large in your eyes ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Sporadic cases ! I have heard any number of them, they are as plentiful as blackberries in Europe. And as for the difference of diagnosis it is almost the rule except when doctors consult together and give concessions to each other. Don't try to throw allopathic dust in my eyes, sir ! I have lived a fairly long time and seen something of the world before my retirement and much more after it.

29. 12. 35

MYSELF: About the Bengali poem — I wrote the lines marked and then the Muse failed. Nishikanta saw them, picked up and completed it. Naturally he has expressed his own sentiments. They are not mine, neither did I know what they would be when I started. I intend some day to write one myself with those lines as they seem quite good. What's your opinion ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your lines are very good. N's poem is very fine, but his style is too strong to agree with yours. It is as if a trumpet were to take up the notes of a flute.

30. 12. 35

MYSELF: I have made quite a vigorous programme to start from the New Year. One, English metre with Arjava — he is willing and another, French with S, provided Mother finds no objection. So ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No objection at all. Enthusiastic approval !

MYSELF: May I ask that promised poem as a New Year present ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You may ask, but who has time for it ? Not yours truly.

MYSELF: My friend Jatin Bal whose photo I sent you the other day, expresses a desire for Darshan. Is permission possible ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No recollection of it at all ! But the Mother remembers and she has given me a glimmering and gleaming reflection of a recollection. Yes, it was the photograph in which you qualified for Abyssinia. Right.

It is the only thing possible for a beginning.

2. 1. 36

MYSELF: R asks me to send you these medical reports.

SRI AUROBINDO: Reports no use unless the medical hieroglyphs are interpreted.

MYSELF: Today P came for her eyes. All on a sudden she burst out into sobs — God knows why !

SRI AUROBINDO: God doesn't.

P is a sort of weeping machine — touch a spring even unintentionally and it starts off.

3. 1. 36

MYSELF: Whatever miracle might happen, I don't see any chance for my caravan !

SRI AUROBINDO: Too many dogs of depression bark ?

4. 1. 36

MYSELF: Too many dogs of depression, Sir, too many ! And not only dogs, but cats and jackals and a host of other friends have made my life a misery !

SRI AUROBINDO: Why are you so fond of this mena-

gerie as to keep it with you ? Turn them out into the street. Or, if that is not charitable to others, drown them in the sea. Don't shake your sorrowful head and say it is easier to say than to do. It is quite possible. It is only the Man of Sorrows that prevents it.

MYSELF: I suppose there is some play of yours behind the recent quarrel I had with X.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, no. Dramas are not my play. I detest them.

MYSELF: Please read C's letter on M's opinion on your philosophy. How can he compare your Yoga with Ramakrishna's ! Yet he is considered as an authority on your yogic philosophy !

SRI AUROBINDO: In a way he is, i.e. he is an authority on his own ideas about my yogic philosophy. But from whom can you expect more than that ?

MYSELF: My only grief is that we can't be simple.

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly. But there are people who are too supermannish or superwomanish to be simple.

6. 1. 36

MYSELF: There has been often a discussion and hence a difference of opinion on the relative greatness of different branches of Art. Some of us are disposed to think of music as the highest; poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture, embroidery following thus in order of merit. Though one may not agree to such a classification, still because of the universality and most direct appeal of music cannot one give it preference ? Poetry is rather limited in its scope and painting even more so. They have to be understood in order to be appreciated in their fullest measure whereas music, apart from the technical aspect which is not absolutely obligatory for an appeal, need not. You know of the stories of beasts and snakes being charmed, not to speak of the hard-hearted Yamaraja, by music ! Take your *Love and Death* as an ex-

ample of poetic excellence. I am afraid people would throng round a piece of music sung by one of the renowned singers, more than round the recital of your poem. Yes, you may have the satisfaction of having an audience of intellectuals and then it will prove my contention that poetry has a limited appeal. Now about painting. I hear quite a number of people have lost their heads over Mona Lisa, even over a copy of it, but I have come away quite sound and strong without even being touched in the heart and I am sure many others have done so. This substantiates again my theory that painting is restricted in its scope. But will you turn the tables by this very fact of the restricted scope and difficult technique of painting and poetry and place Painting, Poetry, Music and so on. Is there really a hierarchy of planes in the Occult ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I fear I must disappoint you. I am *not* going to pass the Gods through a competitive examination and assign a highest place to one and lower places to others. What an idea ! Each has his or her own province on the summits and what is the necessity of putting them in rivalry with the others ? It is a sort of Judgment of Paris you want to impose on me ? Well, but what became of Paris and Troy ? You want me to give the crown or apple to Music and enrage the Goddesses of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Embroidery, all the Nine Muses, so that they will kick at our publications and exhibitions and troop off to other places ? We shall have to build in the future — what then shall we do if the Goddess of Architecture turns severely and says, “I am an inferior Power, am I ? Go and ask your Nirod to build your house with his beloved music !”

Your test of Precedence — universal appeal — is all wrong. I don't know that it is true, in the first place. Some kind of sound called music appeals to everybody, but has really great music a universal appeal ? And, speaking of arts, more people go to the theatre or read

fiction than go to the opera or a concert. What becomes then of the superior universality of music, even in the cheapest sense of universality? Rudyard Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* exercise a more universal appeal than was ever reached by Milton or Keats — we will say nothing of writers like Blake or Francis Thompson; a band on the pier at a seaside resort will please more people than a great piece of music with the orchestration conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. In a world of gods it might be true that the highest makes the most universal appeal, but here in a world of beasts and men (you bring in the beasts — why not play to Bushy and try how she responds?) it is usually the inferior things that have the more general if not quite universal appeal. On the other hand the opposite system you suggest (the tables turned upside down — the least universal and most difficult appeal makes the greatest art) would also have its dangers. At that rate we should have to concede that the cubists and abstract painters had reached the highest art possible, only rivalled by the up-to-date modernist poets of whom it has been said that their works are not at all either read or understood by the public, are read and understood only by the poet himself and are read without being understood by his personal friends and admirers.

...But then there is hardly any pure poetry in this world and the little there is is still *mélangé* with at least a homeopathic dose of intellectual meaning. But again if I admit this thesis of excellence by directness, I shall be getting myself into dangerous waters. For modern painting has become either cubist or abstract and it claims to have got rid of mental representation and established in art the very method of music; it paints not the object, but the truth behind the object — by the use of pure line and colour and geometrical form which is the basis of all forms or else by figures which are not representations but significances. For instance a modern painter wishing to make a portrait of you will paint at the top

a clock surrounded by three triangles, below them a chaos of rhomboids and at the bottom two table castors to represent your feet and he will put in underneath this powerful design, "Portrait of Nirod". Perhaps your soul will leap up in answer to its direct appeal and recognise at once the truth behind the object, behind your vanished physical self, — you will greet your psychic being or your Atman or at least your inner physical or vital being. Perhaps also you won't. Poetry also seems to be striving towards the same end by the same means — the getting away from mind into the depths of life or, as the profane might put it, arriving at truth and beauty through ugliness and unintelligibility. From that you will perhaps deduce that the attempt of painting and poetry to do what music alone can do easily and directly without these acrobatics is futile because it is contrary to their nature — which proves your thesis that music is the highest art because most direct in its appeal to the soul and the feeling. Maybe — or maybe not; as the Jains put it, *syād vā na syād vā*.¹

I have written so much, you will see, in order to say nothing — or at least to avoid your attempt at putting me in an embarrassing dilemma.

Q. E. F.

N. B. This is *my* answer, not the Mother's.

7. 1. 36

[In the medical report I wrote *Achanchar* instead of *Achanchal*. Sri Aurobindo commented]:

Is this *r* or *l*? If *r*, please transform into *l*.

8. 1. 36

MYSELF: If it is *l* and not *r* why do they pronounce *Achanchar*? Is it like our saying অঁব (mango) instead

¹ May be, may not be.

of জ্ঞান? Oh, the very word জ্ঞান takes you, Sir, to the land of — !

SRI AUROBINDO: God knows ! I have not heard their pronunciation. But it is / all right. *R* and *L* are however supposed to be phonetically interchangeable since the beginning of human speech.

10. 1. 36

MYSELF: I won't dilate any more on the subject of sadhana and work but ask you to do it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should I dilate either — at the risk of bursting ? Besides, tonight I have other dilatations (I can't call them delectations) occupying me.

13. 1. 36

MYSELF: "...Dance, dance, O my soul, thou playmate
of Light

Winging the sapphire height.
Into the luminous calm of skies
Uplift my leaden eyes
And on a widening vision pour
The sun-wine of thy soar."

A small poem, after 3 or 4 nights' struggle. Trickle ? Opinion, please. Soul dancing too much ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have no objection to the soul dancing, but to make it dance and wing a height at the same time is a little acrobatic. Also to pour wine (even of a soar, though what the wine of a soar may be I don't know) on the eyes would hardly be beneficial to the vision — in most cases. I admit however that these are perhaps rather too prosaic and Johnsonian objections to the sunwine of your or Amal's dancing soar.

MYSELF:

"Trickle, trickle O mighty Force divine,
Pour, pour thy white moon dreams

Into my stomach, heart and intestine
In little silver streams."

SRI AUROBINDO: Two most damnable blunders, sir. "Intestine" is stressed on the second syllable and pronounced *intéstine*, so how the blazes is it going to rhyme with divine? A doctor misstressing "intestine" — shame! How are you going to cure people if you put wrong stress on their anatomical parts?

Second blunder —

Yogically, psycho-physically etc., etc. stomach, heart and intestine lodge the vital movements, not the physical consciousness — it is there that anger, fear, love, hate and all the other psychological privileges of the animal tumble about and upset the physical and moral digestion. The Muladhara is the seat of the physical consciousness proper. So you have to emend the third line into "Invade the mourning / yearning / yearnful bottom of my spine". That will make it poetically beautiful and psychologically correct.

14. 1. 36

MYSELF: I don't see any vestige of a yogi in me. It will be 3 years in February since I have come here, and I haven't seen even 3 signs! It is your letters, Sir, that have bound me.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce is three years in Yoga? There are people who have to wait twice or three times or four times that time before they get the real sign. A child of nine might say, "Look here, I have been studying for 2 years and yet nobody has decided to propose me as the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University."

15. 1. 36

MYSELF: I send you a letter of my friend J. B. He

wants to know if any general correspondence can be sent to him. Or can he write to you personally ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The difficulty would be about the answer; if I had to do it myself, he would get an answer every three years.

It can be done sometimes.

MYSELF: What does he mean by 'the overmental and supramental stages' which he doesn't want to leave ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am puzzled by the sentence.

MYSELF: People outside feel that we are having great experiences, while we feel a vacuum. Glory to God !

SRI AUROBINDO: Lots of people feel that outside or similar things. Also they feel a bhakti and faith outside which is spoiled or gets rude shocks if they come and stay for some time in the Ashram and converse with its enlightened sadhaks. But that I suppose is all in the game. At any rate it used to be like that. Nowadays I notice some improvement — let us hope that soon it will be an entire change.

MYSELF: Do you really think that I have done something in poetry ? People say that one can't take your remarks on poetry, painting, etc. too literally, because you want to encourage us.

SRI AUROBINDO: A very good beginning. Not yet Homer or Shakespeare, of course !

MYSELF: Mother is giving us doctors very good compliments ! I hear that we confine people to bed till they are really confined !

SRI AUROBINDO. Yes. Mother did pass on that epigram. Doctors were born to hear such remarks.

16. 1. 36

MYSELF: Why are you so afraid of P's screams ? Surely yogis ought to be able to try to bear a little suffering and you ought to encourage or allow, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: She is not that kind of yogi. She

would only scream and get as wild as Durvasa and stop going to the dispensary — apart from copious weeping etc.

19. 1. 36

MYSELF: I realise at every moment that I am not made for the path of the Spirit, neither for any big endeavour in life. I know I shall be unhappy, but are all men born to be happy ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Man of Sorrows ! Man of Sorrows !! knock him off man, knock him off !

20. 1. 36

SRI AUROBINDO: As there are several lamentations to-day besieging me, I have very little time to deal with each separate Jeremiad. Do I understand rightly that your contention is this, "I can't believe in the Divine doing everything for me because it is by my own mighty and often fruitless efforts that I write or do not write poetry and have made myself into a poet." Well, that itself is *épatant*, magnificent, unheard of. It has always been supposed since the infancy of the human race that while a verse-maker can be made or self-made, a poet cannot. "*Poeta nascitur non fit*", a poet is born not made is the dictum that has come down through the centuries and millenniums and was thundered into my ears by the first pages of my Latin Grammar. The facts of literary history seem to justify this stern saying. But here in Pondicherry we have tried not to manufacture poets but to give them birth, a spiritual, not a physical birth into the body. In a number of instances we are supposed to have succeeded — one of these is your noble self — or if I am to believe the Man of Sorrows in you, your abject, miserable, hopeless and ineffectual self. But how was it done ? There are two theories, it seems — one that it was by the Force, the other that it was done by your

own splashing, kicking, groaning Herculean efforts. Now, sir, if it is the latter, if you have done that unprecedented thing, made yourself by your own laborious strength into a poet (for your earlier efforts were only very decent literary exercises) then, sir, why the deuce are you so abject, self-depreciatory, miserable? Don't say that is only a poet who can produce no more than a few poems in many months. Even to have done that, to have become a poet at all, a self-made poet is a miracle over which we can only say Sabash! Sabash! without ever stopping. If your effort could do that, what is there that it can't do? All miracles can be effected by it and a giant self-confident faith ought to be in you. On the other hand, if, as I aver, it is the Force that has done it, what then can it not do? Here too faith, a giant faith is the only logical conclusion. So either way there is room only for Hallelujahs, none for Jeremiads. Q. E. D.

I am obliged to stop — if I go on, there will be no Pranam till 12 o'clock. So send your Jeremiad back to-night and I will see what else to write. Have written this in a headlong hurry — I hope it is not full of *lapsus calami*.

21. 1. 36

SRI AUROBINDO: To continue. The fact that you don't feel a force does not prove that it is not there. The steam engine does not feel a force moving it, but the force is there. A man is not a steam engine? He is very little better, for he is conscious only of some bubbling on the surface which he calls himself and is absolutely unconscious of all the subconscious, subliminal, superconscious forces moving him. (This is a fact which is being more and more established by modern psychology though it has got hold only of the lower forces and not the higher, so you need not turn up your rational nose at it.) He twitters intellectually (= foolishly,) about the surface re-

sults and attributes them all to his 'noble self', ignoring the fact that his noble self is hidden far away from his own vision behind the veil of his dimly sparkling intellect and the reeking fog of his vital feelings, emotions, impulses, sensations and impressions. So your argument is utterly absurd and futile. Our aim is to bring the secret forces out and unvalled into the open so that instead of getting some shadows or lightnings of themselves out through the veil or being wholly obstructed, they may "pour down" and "flow in a river". But to expect that all at once is a presumptuous demand which shows an impatient ignorance and inexperience. If they begin to trickle at first, that is sufficient to justify the faith in a future downpour. You admit that you once or twice felt a force coming down and delivering a poem out of you (your opinion about its worth or worthlessness is not worth a cent, that is for others to pronounce). That is sufficient to blow the rest of your Jeremiad to smithereens; it proves that the force was and is there at work and it is only your sweating Herculean labour that prevents you feeling it. Also it is the trickle that gives assurance of the possibility of the downpour. One has only to go on and by one's patience deserve the downpour or else, without deserving, stick on until one gets it.... It does not matter if you have not a leech-like tenacity — leeches are not the only type of Yogins. If you can stick anyhow or get stuck that is sufficient. The fact that you are not Sri Aurobindo (who said you were?) is an inapt irrelevance. One needs only to be oneself in a reasonable way and shake off the hump when it is there or allow it to be shaken off without clinging to it with a leech-like tenacity worthy of a better cause.

All the rest is dreary stuff of the tamasic ego. As there is a rajasic ego which shouts "What a magnificent powerful sublime divine individual I am, unique and peerless" (of course there are gradations in the pitch,) so there is a tamasic ego which squeaks "What an abject hope-

less, worthless, incapable, unluckily unendowed and uniquely impossible creature I am, — all are great Aurobindos, Dilips, Anilbarans (great for their capacity of novel-reading and self-content, according to you) but I, oh I, oh I!" That's your style. It is this tamasic ego (of course it expresses itself in various ways at various times, I am only rendering your present pitch) which is responsible for the Man of Sorrows getting in. It's all bosh — stuff made up to excuse the luxury of laziness, melancholy and despair. You are in that bog just now because you have descended faithfully and completely into the inert stupidity and die-in-the-mudness of your physical consciousness which, I admit, is a specimen! But so after all is everybody's, only they are different kinds of specimens. What to do? Dig yourself out if you can; if you can't, call for ropes and wait till they come. If God knows what will happen when the Grace descends, that is enough, isn't it? That you don't know is a fact which may be baffling to your — well, your intelligence, but is not of great importance — any more than your supposed unfitness. Who ever was fit, for that matter — fitness and unfitness are only a way of speaking; man is in nature unfit and a misfit (so far as things spiritual are concerned) in his outward nature. But within there is a soul and above there is Grace. "This is all you know or need to know" and, if you don't, well, even then you have at least somehow stumbled into the path and have got to remain there till you get hauled along it far enough to wake up to the knowledge. Amen.

22. 1. 36

MYSELF: Nishikanta sends another poem. He is determined to go at you with his literary volleys.

SRI AUROBINDO: Kept them till tomorrow. Am racing with time to get work finished before 8 a.m. in the morning, so no time to receive today's volley.

MYSELF: When a person with few or no friends comes to see you, how to turn your face away? If any disturbance results from it I can bear if it is helpful, but when it becomes too frequent it'll be unbearable.

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope it will not be too frequent. Don't want you to fall again either into the flummocks or flumps or into the dumps. Don't look for these words, at least the first two in the dictionary, they are not there — my own Joycean neologisms.

23. 1. 36

MYSELF: I am surprised, Sir, that you are still complaining of time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Are you? You wouldn't be if you were in my place.

MYSELF: Now that your correspondence is reduced I suppose you are working at your *Savitri*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where is the reduction of correspondence? I have to be occupied with correspondence from 9 to 12 p.m. (minus one hour), again after bath and meal from 2.30 to 7 a.m. All that apart from afternoon work. And still much is left undone. And you think I can write *Savitri*? You evidently believe in miracles!

MYSELF: What about the poem you promised?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have no time even to think about it or about writing poems at all.

24. 1. 36

MYSELF: N is passing excessive phosphate, shall we make a microscopic exam?

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you want to microscope him out of existence? The loss of phosphates, I suppose, explains his weakness.

MYSELF: Or shall we turn a deaf ear to his complaints?

SRI AUROBINDO: What complaints? Micturition and phosphates? Tell him to learn to economise his phosphates instead of squandering them and he will become strong and healthy as a tiger.

MYSELF: But do you really mean that till 7 a.m. your pen goes on in an aeroplanic speed? Then it must be due more to outside correspondence. I don't see many books or envelopes now on the staircase. Is the Supramental freedom from these not in view?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your not seeing unfortunately does not dematerialise them. Books are mainly for the Mother and there is sometimes a mountain, but letters galore. On some days only there is a lull and then I can do something.

MYSELF: I hesitate to believe much in Grace. Is not Grace something that comes down unconditionally?

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not depend on conditions — which is rather a different thing from an unconditional surrender to any and every sadhak.

MYSELF: Even Ramakrishna's baby-cat type of sadhak has to make a decisive movement of surrender and compel the rest of the being to obedience, which is the most difficult thing on earth.

SRI AUROBINDO: I never heard that the baby cat was like that — if it were it would not be a baby cat. (It is the baby monkey trying to become a baby cat who does that.) But you have evidently so great a knowledge of spiritual things (surpassing mine and Ramakrishna's) that I can only bow my head and pass humbly on to people with less knowledge.

MYSELF: If anybody can do the baby-cat surrender at a stroke, is it not because his "unfinished curve" in the past life has finished it in this?

SRI AUROBINDO: Hail, Rishi, all-knower! Tell us all about our past lives.

MYSELF: Surely the soul instead of sleeping has to aspire etc. to call down its Lord the Grace. Where do

you see that aspiration in me ? If you build my spiritual castle on those one or two minutes' brief visitations of Ananda and that too once or twice only, excluding the moments of *darshan* of your great self, which also have been sometimes marred in these three years — and if you build my poetic mansion on little trickles, then I can only say — well, what shall I say ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Better say nothing. It will sound less foolish.

MYSELF: You have often inveighed against my asking you not to use yourself as an argument against the Divine. But what is the history of your sadhana in your own words — a Herculean practice of Pranayama, concentration and what not and then, after years of waiting the Grace of Brahman. Still you are *panchamukha*¹ in the praise of Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO: What a wooden head ! What is the use of saying things if you deliberately misinterpret what I write ? I said clearly that the pranayama brought me nothing of any kind of spiritual realisation. I had stopped it long before. The Brahman experience came when I was groping for a way, doing no sadhana at all, making no effort because I didn't know what effort to make, all having failed. Then in three days I got an experience which most yogis get only at the end of a long Yoga, got it without wanting or trying after it, got it to the surprise of Lele who was trying to get me something quite different. But I don't suppose you are able to understand, so I say no more. I can only look mournfully at your ununderstanding pate.

MYSELF: I remember instances where people have failed in their sadhana and gone away. The Divine couldn't do much because he says he doesn't propose to do anything against the will of the individual, which means aspiration, rejection, surrender, before the Grace comes down.

¹ Five-faced, all-praise.

SRI AUROBINDO: It can mean also waiting on the Grace of the Divine ! The will of the individual in this respect does not mean anything like that. If the will of the individual is towards perdition, if his ego becomes hostile to the Divine, then the Divine is not bound to show him a Grace he does not want at all and kicks at.

MYSELF: Take the case of X. My God, to think that after all those Napoleonic efforts in poetry, and having succeeded, one is still driven to desperation because, after all, one has obtained nothing spiritually in spite of aspiration, meditation etc. — this is blood-curdling and at once smashes your theory of Karmayoga through poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Napoleonic rubbish ! He was the worst poet in the world before he came here and here immediately as soon as I put my force he began writing beautiful poems. Yet it was by his Napoleonic efforts that he did it ? Imbecility, thy name is ego.

I was not putting any Karmayoga theory — I was simply mocking at your absurd idea that it was by your own mighty efforts that you had succeeded in writing poetry which any good judge (you are not one) would call genuine poetry.

Non, monsieur, — j'ai d'autres chats à fouetter. I have other cats to whip — I can't go on whipping one cat all the time. A few lashes on the margin are all I can spare for you just now.

There are three main possibilities for the sadhak:

1. To wait on the Grace and rely on the Divine.
2. To do everything himself like the full Adwaitin and the Buddhist.
3. To take the middle path, — go forward by aspiration and rejection etc. helped by the Forces. The first, it appears, is too easy for you to do it, the second is too difficult for you to do, the third being easy in parts and difficult in parts is as impossible for you to do it. Right ? Amen !!!

MYSELF: Calling for ropes and waiting till they come

is all right, but who knows what may happen meanwhile. Won't the expeditionist expire in the jungles, in trying to scale the Himalayas ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Who asks him to explore the jungles (of his own logic, I suppose) or climb the Himalayas ? What has this to do with what I said ? I did not tell you to make Herculean efforts.

MYSELF: It seems to me that behind any difficult endeavour there is the seeking for Ananda which acts as the motive-power, isn't it so ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not that I know of !

MYSELF: So in every way is there room for Hallelujah or Jeremiad ?

SRI AUROBINDO: All right, sir, Jeremy away.

MYSELF: To think that 5 or 6 years more of barren desert stretch between me and the Divine Grace, coagulates my blood !

SRI AUROBINDO: Coagulate ! coagulate ! coagulate !

MYSELF: I understand that Dr. Banerjee examined I. K. and told you about her case. Do you remember ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, no. It is ancient history.

25. 1. 36

MYSELF: Very well, Sir, whip the cats and the dogs, bulls and hogs, to your heart's content ! Only the whipping has been rather severe in my case, but no help since I have surrendered my life and death at your feet, O cruel one, I shall accept all whipping as a gift of your compassion !

SRI AUROBINDO: Righto.

MYSELF: I was grieved to see that after writing such a lot you struck off all of it—it would have perhaps helped me. My difficulties run parallel to X's, I find; only there's a difference of degree.

SRI AUROBINDO: Say rather that you have borrowed your difficulties from him or, say, run in his wake—a

big steamer throwing a yacht into stormy waters.

MYSELF: Anyway, I suppose I am again talking rot. But these are fundamental wooden-headed difficulties !

SRI AUROBINDO: Terrible rot.

MYSELF: Lastly, I have embraced your "waiting on the Grace". I'll now dance and prance. A little *khichuri*, *alubhājā*¹ and a little harmless platonic love. Agreed ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have no objection to alubhaja, but to the devil with your platonic love.

28. 1. 36

MYSELF: B has phimosis.

SRI AUROBINDO: What kind of medical animal is this ?

30. 1. 36

MYSELF: You forgot to have a look at Nishikanta's poetry yesterday ? It has come back just as I sent it — want of time and absence of mind — I mean overmind ?

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that ? But it is not surprising if I overlook something, considering the crash through which I have to go at a gallop.

MYSELF: My nights are again becoming heavy and I don't know how to deal with them.

SRI AUROBINDO: So are mine with a too damnably heavy burden of letters to write.

MYSELF: I come out of bed with the morose thought that another night has passed away and I have done nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO: You mean the morbid thought !

MYSELF: Thoughts of past pleasures and enjoyments are hopping in and out !

SRI AUROBINDO: Man alive, send them hopping off for good. What a masochism in all that !

¹ Fried potato.

31. 1. 36

MYSELF: You compare your nights with mine ! God above ! Yours Sir, is a labour of love —

SRI AUROBINDO: Love under protest then or at least labour under protest !

MYSELF: And mine — labour of Yoga ?

SRI AUROBINDO: A labour of Bhoga ?¹

2. 2. 36

MYSELF: You wrote — The Divine Force which is the force of the Mother — but which Mother ? Ours or some universal Mother as people call ? Perhaps an ignorant and foolish question but can't help it.

SRI AUROBINDO: How many Mothers are there ? Who is this some universal Mother ? How many of these some universal Mothers are there ?

3. 2. 36

MYSELF: Regarding 'how many Mothers are there ?' K says that all powers, force, Light in the universe belong to you and emanate from you. In that case, I asked him — "Does Raman Maharshi who is an aspirant of Impersonal Brahman get response from Mother and Sri Aurobindo ?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Who is the Mother and who is Sri Aurobindo ? And who is this fellow you call the Impersonal Brahman ?

MYSELF: K says, "Yes, because they are identified with the Supreme and the Supreme is static and dynamic at the same time." I answered — may be. Krishna is supposed to have contained the whole universe in his mouth. Why is it said then that he is an overmind god ? Doesn't

¹ Enjoyment.

it mean that there is a greater godhead than Krishna ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What was said was that Krishna as a manifestation on earth opened the possibility of the Overmind consciousness here to men and stood for that, as Rama was the incarnation in mental Man. If Krishna was an overmind “god” that means he was not an Incarnation, not the Divine, but somebody else who claimed to be the Divine — i.e. he was a god who somehow thought he was God.

MYSELF: I have no objection to your being the Supreme, only it stupefies me to think of you as such !

SRI AUROBINDO: But there was no question about my being the Supreme; the question was whether there was one Divine Mother or 20,000 Divine Mothers. At the same time I don't see why it should stupefy one (you ?) in spite of your absence of personal objections to think of me as such (the Supreme). Why, you are yourself the Supreme, aren't you ? *So'ham, tattvam asi Nirada*, ঈশ্বর কোন বেটা, আমিই ঈশ্বর¹ (Vivekananda.) আমি in this formula means not V but anyone, that is to say Nirod. Also vide K. So what's this stupefaction about I should like to know. When everybody is the Supreme and of everybody it can be said that he is God, why should I alone as such stupefy you ?

5. 2. 36

MYSELF: Does it mean that wherever a sincere heart is aspiring for the Divine, his aspiration reaches your ears ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why my ears ? Ears are not necessary for the purpose. You might just as well say, reaches me by the post.

MYSELF: M is much better today, Sir, and the doctor has asked him to eat macaroni and potatoes. But the fellow can't bear the name of potato ! Very queer, all

¹ He is I, That art thou, Nirod. Who is this person Ishwara, I am Ishwara.

of us are mad over it in the Ashram !

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite queer, for he has surely eaten plenty of potatoes in the Ashram.

MYSELF: Why should you stupefy me ? Good Lord ! Have you forgotten how Arjuna was stupefied, horrified, flabbergasted by seeing the *Viśvarūpa*¹ of Krishna whom he had thought of as his friend, guru, playmate. Could I, for a moment play all these pranks on you if I saw your *Viśvarūpa* ?

SRI AUROBINDO: But that was because the Vishwarupa was enjoying a rather catastrophic dinner, with all the friends and relations of Arjuna stuck between his *dam-ṣṭrāni karālāni*.² My vishwarupa has no tusks, sir, none at all. It is a pacifist vishwarupa.

MYSELF: Already people say that I have no respect for you because I write anything and everything ! 'Sri Aurobindo who is the Lord Supreme with whom he plays all these pranks !'

SRI AUROBINDO: And I return the compliment — I mean reply without restraint, decorum or the right grave rhythm. That is one reason why I indulge so freely in brackets.

MYSELF: No, Sir, I am satisfied with you as Sri Aurobindo pure and simple.

SRI AUROBINDO: No objection, I only suggested that I don't know who this Sri Aurobindo pure and simple is. If you do, I congratulate you.

MYSELF: I have sent P's photograph also, but apparently there was no contact.

SRI AUROBINDO: Plenty of people have sent their photographs — some mad, some sane, some good, some bad, some indifferent. You don't expect all to get the contact, do you ? That would be too too even for a vishwarupa.

¹ Cosmic form.

² Fearful tusks.

9. 2. 36

MYSELF: People will not seek a sorrowless untainted everlasting happiness, even if shown the way — because they will consider it beyond their powers to attain.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is also with many because they prefer the joy mixed with sorrow, মানুষের হাসিকান্না¹ and consider your everlasting happiness an everlasting bore.

11. 2. 36

MYSELF: You have called Bankim a Rishi. Do you think his *Bande Mataram* a real mantra or that he actually saw the country as the Mother?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, the *Bande Mataram* acted as a mantra and so I suppose I gave him the credit of Rishihood. Can't say whether he saw. Must ask him.

MYSELF: When you wrote that you look upon India not as an inert, dead mass of matter, but as the very Mother, the living Mother, I believe you *saw* that Truth — or was it just the expression of a poetic or patriotic sentiment?

SRI AUROBINDO: Merely a poetic or patriotic sentiment — just as in yourself only your flesh, skin, bones and other things of which the senses gave their evidence are real; but what you call your mind and soul do not self-exist, being merely psychological impressions created by the food you eat and the activity of the glands. Poetry and patriotism have of course the same origin and the things they speak of are quite unreal. Amen.

MYSELF: There is a chronic difficulty with B's phimosi-

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, if you clap a word like that on an illness, do you think it is easy for the patient to recover?

¹ Tears and laughter of man.

MYSELF: A complains of nausea. May be due to worms. Liver pain better.

SRI AUROBINDO: She says you spoke wrathfully to Becharlal and Becharlal spoke wrathfully to her and accused her of high crimes and misdemeanours (like irregularity in eating) of which she was not guilty. So she is very wounded and won't go to Doctors any more!! Fact? or liver?

12. 2. 36

MYSELF:

What thinkest Thou of this anapaest poem,
Sir —
Written by my humble self? Pray, does it stir
Any soft feelings in Thy deep within?
Or touches not even Thy Supramental skin?

SRI AUROBINDO:

So soft, so soft, I almost coughed, then went
aloft
To supramental regions where rainbow-
breasted pigeons
Coo in their sacred legions.

N. B. This inspired doggerel is perfectly private. It is an effort at abstract or surrealist poetry, but as I had no models to imitate, I may have blundered.

13. 2. 36

MYSELF: I had to show that doggerel to Amal as I couldn't decipher. Amal suggests if your "perfectly private" is a joke, after all.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir. Quite serious. Can't afford to play jokes like that in public.

MYSELF: Is that "Coo in their sacred legions"?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the cooing is the supramental zenith of the softness and the surrealist transformation of the cough.

MYSELF: You have made me very happy by your comment on my poem I had sent you. But I doubt if the same sustained level will be maintained. Amal says that he too is not able to do it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very few poets can. The best poetry does not come by streams except in periods of extraordinary inspiration. It usually comes by intermittent drops though sometimes three or four drops at a time. Of course there are exceptions — Shakespeare etc. but that kind of spear does not shake everywhere.

MYSELF: Spoke wrathfully? I thought I am a very calm and peaceful man. But I'll tell you what happened: Dr. Becharlal and I were breaking our heads over the budget when A entered. I was a bit troubled about it and I asked Becharlal what her complaint was and he asked her in Gujarati: 'Have you done some indiscretion in the diet?' that's all. Now you can judge for yourself.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I don't know why but you have the reputation of being a fierce and firebrand doctor who considers it a sin for patients to have an illness; you may be right but tradition demands that a doctor should be soft like butter, soothing like treacle, sweet like sugar and jolly like jam. So!

14. 2. 36

MYSELF: If the tradition demands, we shall try to be softer than butter but we may be too tempting and evoke a response from the patient's palate for making delicious toast. Who will save us then?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, if you are too, too sweet. You must draw the line somewhere.

MYSELF: A doctor says that one has to be firm, stern and hard with women. They may not like it superficially, but they enjoy it and stick to the doctor who gives them hard knocks. Cave-man spirit?

Dr. X seems no less a firebrand than myself, but wo-

men seem to like him.

SRI AUROBINDO: He must have been a he-man. She-women enjoy it from he-men. But all women are not she-women and all men are not he-men. Moreover, there is an art as well as a nature in that kind of thing which you lack.

He's a he-man. Even so the women have ended by saying 'No more of X'.

MYSELF: You referred to "circumstances being exceptional" as regards my early success in English versification. But how are they exceptional?

Let me know
How 'tis so
A dullard like me
Bursting like a sea
With the heart of the Muse
Makes his rhythm fuse?

SRI AUROBINDO:

You are opening, opening, opening
Into a wider, wider scopening
That fills me with a sudden hopening
That I may carry you in spite of gropening
Your soul into the supramental ropening.

N. B. Surrealist poetry.

15. 2. 36

MYSELF: How is it, Sir, that my letter and the poem came away as they went? Because I was late or some Supramental forgetfulness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Never had a glimpse of either of them. Must have been hiding scared in your bag.

MYSELF: (Tagore) "For this have I kept awake all night and done sadhana". (Nishikanta) "I have endured mosquito-bites all over my body for this, and it has come back without receiving your gracious look". (Nirod) "Now I'm bursting into tears of despair. I'll send it again at

your door. You will kill me, O Guru, if you forget it this time !”

SRI AUROBINDO: (Sri Aurobindo) “O must I groan
and moan and scarify my poor inspired bones
To get my poem back as if it were a bill from
Smith or Jones ?”

N. B. Abstract poetry, very abstract.

MYSELF: By the way, today is the date of my arrival, if you remember. I had forgotten it myself until Sanjiban reminded me. When you read this the day will be a past date, but the blessings won't !

SRI AUROBINDO: Blessings and plenty of them !

16. 2. 36

MYSELF: Nishikanta thinks that it is easier for you to send Force for English verse than for Bengali. He has felt it, he says. D the sceptic, even thinks that for English you have an easy work comparatively — words, expressions, even the technique you can direct through your Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why the deuce should I do that ? If I had to compose the whole poem myself, why go on and pump it into some other person's mind ? Have not I a fountain pen and couldn't I write it and isn't there Nolini to type it ?

MYSELF: Whereas in Bengali it is more of a general sort. True ? Since Bengali-code you don't know, or shy to admit you can't do that ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Weird !

MYSELF:

“Benighted traveller sore, why do you moan
Because a transient darkness entwines your way ?”

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this “sore” ? It sounds like a bear with a sore head. Benighted also sounds like an abuse.

MYSELF:

“When the Divine like a loving friend has poured
His luscious grace on thee...”

SRI AUROBINDO: “luscious” is too palatal or sensual
to be an adjective of “Grace”.

17. 2. 36

MYSELF: Please have a look at the poem and give
some comments.

SRI AUROBINDO: Noted with comments (poetic and
prosaic) on the poem itself.

MYSELF: Here is my attempt at the use of anapaests
in the iambic metre:

“The dismal clouds haunting my days and nights
Dissolve into a calm transparent wide
Horizon, when ascends on the black heights
Thy moon increasing in its luminous tide.”

SRI AUROBINDO: It is stressed *transpárent*, not *tráns-
pa-rent*. What a howler ! It makes me “drop into poetry” —
thus

Sir, you seem ápparéntly ignorant
That párent is the trick and not párént.
And yet the stress transpires transpárently
And is appárent to both ear and eye.
So you compáre and do not cómpare things;
Your soul prépare, not prépare heavenly wings.

22. 2. 36

MYSELF: You will find something in my famous cor-
respondence bag, which may startle you ! Well, the pen
is a present from A. The size and everything will suit
you best, though the nib may not. And I send it to you
that your writing may flow in rivers from the pen, in my

book, not in a few stingy lines !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! what a Falstaff of a fountain-pen !

But it is not the pen that is responsible for the stinginess; the criminal is Time and with a fat pen he can be as niggardly as with a lean one.

23. 2. 36

MYSELF: As there is *no correspondence* now, please send one or two poems from your old or new ones, if possible. Will you, Sir ? Asking for the file would be too much, I suppose !

SRI AUROBINDO [underlining 'no correspondence']: What a rash statement !

25. 2. 36

MYSELF: 'Exceptional circumstances' whatever they might have been, have disappeared !

SRI AUROBINDO: Make them reappear.

MYSELF: Expected many things or at least something from Darshan but don't see anywhere any sign of it !

SRI AUROBINDO: Many Americans, at least, what was not expected ! It is always the unexpected that happens, you see.

26. 2. 36

MYSELF: You are fine, you are wonderful, Sir ! How the dickens am I to make them reappear when I don't know what they are ? I asked you what the exceptional circumstances were. In reply you have delighted my soul with surrealist poetry; but not my intellect, "widening, widening" is not the cause, but the effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but that's just it. Widen, widen, scopen, scopen and the poetry may come in a torrent

roaring and cascading through an enlarged fissure in yours and the world's subtle cranium.

MYSELF: Now I don't find poetry anywhere on the horizon.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know? It may be hiding behind a cloud.

MYSELF: Maybe this disappearance of poetry is the unexpected that has happened as a result of Darshan. But the result of Darshan in some other quarters leaves me staggered and staggered! I can't imagine such an incident taking place in the Ashram—I mean, of course, N gripping M's throat. It makes me rather aghast. Coupled with that incident of R rushing to shoe-beat P. Good Lord! but I suppose they are all in the game!

SRI AUROBINDO: You seem to be the most candid and ignorant baby going. We shall have to publish an "Ashram News and Titbits" for your benefit. Have you never heard of N's going for K's head with a powerfully-brandished hammer? Or of his howling challenges to C to come out and face him, till Mother herself had to interfere and stop him? Or of his yelling and hammering in rage at C's door till D came and dragged him away? These things happened within a short distance of your poetic ears and yet you know nothing??? N is subject to these fits and has always been so. The Darshan is not responsible. And he is not the only howler. What about M herself? and half a dozen others? Hunger strikes? Threats of suicide? —————¹ rushes to leave the Ashram etc., etc. All from the same source, sir, and apparently part of the game.

MYSELF: Whatever it may have been due to, the result of the Darshan has been very disturbing in some quarters. Difficulties of individual nature rushing up?

SRI AUROBINDO: Individual and general. The subconscious, sir, the subconscient. Brilliant irruptions of the subconscient Brahman into the dullness of ordinary life.

¹ Word indecipherable.

28. 2. 36

MYSELF: If by "widening" you mean that I have made a mighty *conscious* effort, well, that's just not it.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, I did not mean that.

MYSELF: But with the little effort I have made, I can't get even a glimpse of the Presence !

SRI AUROBINDO: But you don't widen ! If you did (I suppose you are too lazy to do so) you would get a glimpse and more.

MYSELF: The laws of its coming and going are unknown. I feel happiness and peace, and I write — you say I have widened.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. If you had not widened, how could the blessed thing get in ? Of course whether you widened yourself or it widened you and forced its way is another matter.

MYSELF: It goes as it comes.

SRI AUROBINDO: It always does, you know. But it comes back too, if you allow it.

MYSELF: The tragedy is that I know nothing of its reason of arrival and departure. It has no railway timetable !

SRI AUROBINDO: No reason. Only unreason or super-reason. Keep your end up and it will arrive again and some day perhaps after Jack-in-the-boxing like that sufficiently, one day it will sit down and say, "Here I am for good. Send for the priest and let's be married." With these things that is the law and the rule and the reason and rhyme of it and everything.

MYSELF: At times I think why the devil do I bother my head with poetry ? Poetry, poetry, poetry ! Have I come here for blessed poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You haven't. But the poetry has come

¹ Salutation to the subconscious Brahman.

for you. So why shout ?

MYSELF: I know that success in English poetry is as far away as the stars in heaven in spite of your remark to the contrary, though I must confess to having some contentment in writing.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! The stars in heaven don't stroll in and pay a visit — nor do they stroll out again.

MYSELF: Now let me tell you how an Englishman named T visiting our Ashram, looks at our versification in his tongue which has thrown cold water on it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not interested in the looks of your Englishman.

T's 'tongue' has thrown cold water on it — or what ? This sentence is almost as unintelligible as T's own English.

MYSELF: He had a heated discussion with D and said he could not understand at all why we Easterners should write poetry in English, deserting our own language.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is his understanding of such immense importance ? I might just as reasonably ask him why Westerners like him should go to practise an Eastern thing like spirituality or Yoga, leaving their own parliaments, factories and what not. But not being T in intelligence I don't ask such absurd questions.

MYSELF: He seems to know definitely that we shan't be able to handle English as an Englishman would.

SRI AUROBINDO: A T like his father Tom, also his uncles Dick and Harry, must of course be omniscient.

MYSELF: He says: "Supposing an Englishman were to write in Bengali !"

SRI AUROBINDO: It would depend on the Englishman and how he did it.

MYSELF: D argued: "The *Gitanjali* of Tagore was appreciated by many English poets. Conrad's prose ranks as high as any great English writer's. Sarojini Naidu and some others were praised by Gosse, Binyon and De La Mare."

SRI AUROBINDO: Add Santayana whose prose is better than most Englishmen's.

MYSELF: T rejoined: "The interests of those praisers were extra-literary. Show the works of the Indians to people like Eliot and see." God knows what he means.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think God knows. What the blazes does all this nonsense mean?... God save us from such people and their opinions.

MYSELF: As for Conrad, T says he is a Westerner, and surely there is a bigger difference in tradition, expression, feeling between an Easterner and an Englishman than between a Westerner and a Westerner.

SRI AUROBINDO: In other words, any Western tradition, expression, feeling — even Polish or Russian — can be legitimately expressed in English, however un-English it may be, but an Eastern spirit, tradition or temper cannot?...

MYSELF: T objects to our making even an experiment.

SRI AUROBINDO: How terrible! Then of course everybody must stop at once. I too must not presume to write in English — for I have an Indian mind and spirit and am that dreadful Indian thing, a Yogi.

MYSELF: Can we say that he is absolutely wrong?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nobody ever is absolutely wrong. There is an infinitesimal atom of truth even in the most lunatic proposition ever made.

MYSELF: We Indians can't enter into the subtleties of a foreign tongue so we run the risk of writing un-English English.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who is this "we"? Many Indians write better English than many educated Englishmen.

MYSELF: I believe he would waive his objection in your case.

SRI AUROBINDO: How graciously kind of him! After all perhaps I can continue to write in English. Only poor Amal will have to stop. He can't write a line after the cold water of T's tongue.

MYSELF: But even for expressing spirituality, must we not try to make the vehicle as perfect as possible?

SRI AUROBINDO: Who said not except the unparalleled T?

MYSELF: Now, is there any chance for it? T, an Englishman, says "None." And you?

SRI AUROBINDO: How can my opinion have any value against that of an Englishman — especially when that Englishman calls himself T?

As I said at the beginning I have no interest in T's opinions and set no value by them. Even the awful fact of his being an Englishman does not terrify me. Strange, isn't it? I have seen some lucubrations of his meant to be spiritual or Yogic and they are the most horrible pretentious inflated circumlocutionary bombastic would-be-abysmally-profound language that I have seen. For a man who talks of English style, tradition, expression, feeling, idiom it was the worst production and most un-English possible. Few Indians could have beaten it. And the meaning nil. Also he is the gentleman who finds that there is "very little spirituality" in India. So hats off to T (even though we have no hats), and for the rest silence.

3. 3. 36

MYSELF: As soon as I enter the Dispensary, it seems some black forces ride on my shoulders. I want to escape and spend a few afternoon hours away in the loneliness of Nature's company till this melancholia lasts. Can a cycle be had for the purpose?

SRI AUROBINDO: Again X! Can't supply a cycle for every melancholiac. Would have to buy 20 new ones immediately and then the whole Ashram would turn melancholiac in order to have cycles.

MYSELF: From the tone of my letter you may imagine that I am making you responsible for my pathologi-

cal condition. Not at all; it is my blessed nature or Man of Sorrows as you title it, though I don't understand why you say that I have borrowed them from X. Diffidence, self-distrust has always been my element from the very start.

SRI AUROBINDO: Your "not at all" is a delusion. You doubt like him in the same terms, write like him with the same symptoms similarly expressed, want to cycle into Nature like him etc., etc. — and still you say, "No X!"

MYSELF: You call me lazy, but I am not lazy. When the inner condition is all right, I can work at a poem for hours.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then why the hell don't you keep it right?

MYSELF: I gather the painting here is only in its infancy, but this piece of poetry by A. K. is as mature a work as any great poet's.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but all the same very remarkable at times, e.g. for a boy of R's years with no systematic training some of the work he has done is quite unexpected. Only what has been done is not yet great and finished art. But if Y is to be acclaimed as a mighty artist for his paintings, I don't see why our artists should be underrated any longer. Let us proclaim them also as epoch-making geniuses.

MYSELF: You say T doesn't deserve a public castigation. I wish he did because he is again bombarding Dara on Indian English — apart from other things!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not only so, but I refuse to figure as discussing with him on an equal platform. You will ask me next to enter into a debate with Chellu¹ on Vedanta. There are limits.

MYSELF: Another miracle! A. K.'s poetry has caused a flutter. How has this feat been done? A fellow who has never written any bit of poetry produces such a remarkable poem. How could he have produced it?

¹ An Ashram servant.

SRI AUROBINDO: What a “hower” you are ! You are puzzled because you are always demanding a rational process familiar to the ordinary physical mind from a suprarational thing like Yoga.... If you persist in that you will remain puzzled to the end of the chapter.

MYSELF: I have been labouring for years, yet produced nothing so big and, when I write a poem, I know by my own active experience the way it comes.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because you are a “hower” and an “efforter” — so the Divine or the Overself or whatever people may like to call it has to pretend with you that it is done in you by your stupendous effort and the how has to be shown — the how being that you work 40 hours and produce 4 lines.

4. 3. 36

MYSELF: You ask me why I don't keep my inner condition right. As if I knew how to do it ! It keeps itself right or goes wrong without the least caring for my effort.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about the wonderful efforts (unprecedented in human history) by which X and you have made yourselves poets ? Why can't you put some of that superhuman effort into this ? If you do and succeed, I will rigorously leave all the credit to you and not ask any for a superior Power.

MYSELF: The Force had seized me and has now left me — that's all.

SRI AUROBINDO: But what is this talk about Force ? Nothing is done in this world except by one's own effort. Ask your own reason and X.

MYSELF: You say I am an effortor. Well, without effort, how to write ? If I had waited for a spontaneous downpour of Inspiration, my outpours by now would have been only 4 or 5 poems !

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't understand. You say it is only

by effort that one can write poetry — that is, what is written is something constructed by mere effort. It follows that anybody who makes a necessary effort can become a great poet. Uptill now it was thought that there was some mysterious thing called inspiration. There are plenty of people who have made Herculean and untiring efforts night and day but have not succeeded in writing anything that others could call poetry — they may have just produced good or bad verse. That however in the light of your luminous rationality is evidently an agelong error. As X might say “I labour and write poems day and night and people give the credit to some damned thing (not my own great self) they call Inspiration.” Evidently. But what is this about a few cases? Are you going to tell me that Inspiration after all exists? Can't be.

MYSELF: You say that because I am an ‘efforter’ I write 4 lines in 40 hours! Is that so? Then I have yet to know how without an effort things pour in at all times.

SRI AUROBINDO: What things? Poetry flows into you at all times?

MYSELF: From your answers it seems there is a very simple way of doing things and it is only our egoistic foolishness that refuses to take it and goes in for laborious effort. Knowing how to bow for some such thing I suppose or is it some passivity?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that is the idea in Yoga — that by a right passivity one opens oneself to the greater than one's limited self and effort is only useful for that condition. There is also an idea even in the ordinary life that the individual is only an instrument in the hands of a Universal Energy though his ego takes the credit of all he does. But these are exploded ideas which you need not consider.

MYSELF: When did I refuse to accept experience as valid? I may want a rational explanation of a process, if any, but I don't disbelieve an experience.

SRI AUROBINDO: I said you did not believe in the knowledge given by those who have the experience — you want a how that agrees with your own lack of knowledge and lack of experience.

MYSELF: In my case I have found that mostly I have to make a great effort and then when the thing comes down, people call it the result of the Force, I am quite justified in refusing to allow the Force most credit.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite. It was your efforts that turned non-poets into poets ! Hail you wonder-workers !

MYSELF: If you say that the Force has different ways of working — at times making one sweat and struggle for the sake of fun and at other times coming and sweeping one like spring-breeze — nothing to argue.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the experience of the Yogis — but that is of no value.

MYSELF: If you don't exclaim, 'Again X !'...

SRI AUROBINDO: I do !

MYSELF: I shall write what he very aptly and eloquently expresses — I did everything with my effort, and you say that the Force has made me do it ! If it's the Force that's doing it then why alas, this bone-breaking !

SRI AUROBINDO: All I can say is that if it was X's Force (of effort) that turned in a moment a hobbling ass into a winged eagle for that was what happened to his poetry, it has done something no one ever did before. But no doubt you are both of you right. I am rather coming to the conclusion that this world should be left to his own "efforts" to arrive where it can and the Mother and myself should take tickets for some other.

6. 3. 36

MYSELF: I have gulped down your satires quite smoothly, Sir. As regards poetry, my point is *Force* and *Inspiration* are there, *effort* also exists...

SRI AUROBINDO: What then ?

MYSELF: ...and on many occasions I find that the effort predominates over much.

SRI AUROBINDO: Much too much !

MYSELF: Inspiration leaves one sometimes and one goes on beating and beating, hammering and hammering, but it comes not !

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly. When any real effect is produced, it is not because of the beating and the hammering, but because an inspiration slips down between the raising of the hammer and the falling and gets in under cover of the beastly noise. It is when there is no need of effort that the best comes. Effort is all right, but only as an excuse for inducing the Inspiration to come.... Still one makes efforts, but it is not the effort that produces the result but the inspiration that comes in answer to it. You knock at the door to make the fellow inside answer. He may or he may not; if he lies mum, you have only to walk off, swearing.

That's effort and inspiration.

MYSELF: One has to work hours and hours on end. What do you call this labour ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Hammering, making a beastly noise so that Inspiration may get excited and exasperated and fling something through the window, muttering "I hope that will keep this insufferable tinsmith quiet."

MYSELF: If Mother has no objection and R is willing to look after the Dispensary, I would like to fly to the Lake or Villenur on cycle !

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother says if nothing is needed to be done and nothing happens while you are away and R has only to sit and guard the Dispensary, then it is all right. On condition of course he doesn't kick down the Dispensary by an ill-considered movement of his legs in your absence ! This last is my addition.

7. 3. 36

MYSELF: With all those 'buts' and 'ifs', I drew back today. So if Mother doesn't really approve I won't go. I didn't quite catch if Mother said that in the Pranam.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother had forgotten all about Villenur and the R-guarded Dispensary. So that had nothing to do with her look at Pranam.

MYSELF: It is really a pity that Jaswant is going — with so many parts also !

SRI AUROBINDO: He is going with tears and full of blessings. Perhaps it is the "parts" you speak of that call him — his horoscope was found to be brilliant and almost Leninesque. Perhaps one day you will gaze at the figure of পাগলা যশোবন্ত¹ (I think that is Mridu's description) presiding over the destinies of a Communist India !! Why not ? Hitler in his "handsome Adolf" days was not less পাগলা² or prettier, so there is a chance.

MYSELF: As he is going tonight, if any intelligent fellow with some interest in work can take his place or guard the place at least, please give us one.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! What high expectations ! Where are they, these intelligent interested fellows who are ready to stand guard over the Dispensary ? Spot them, please.

MYSELF: My brain is now less hampered by the body's indisposition.

My boil has burst and as you see

From the depression I am free.

Thanks Guru, thanks to thee !

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I got irritated last night by your persistent boiling and put a gigantic Force which, I am glad to see, burst the little boil.

Thank God for that !

¹ Mad Jaswant.

² Mad.

Free from boil,
At poems toil
Laugh and grow fat.

MYSELF: U now vacillates or hesitates, thinking of pain and suffering, etc. and says, after all how much can it grow in one or two years? So I leave him with his tumour on the neck.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother was looking at his mango. It looked to her as if it was rather deep and would need more than a local anaesthetic. If he is afraid of the operation, no use operating.

MYSELF: D's temperature was 101.4° in the morning; evening, 100.4° . Had two half-boiled eggs in the morning as he was hungry because we starved him last night!

SRI AUROBINDO: A robust patient!

MYSELF: He says he has eaten two eggs out of greed, asks to be excused.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite safe!

9. 3. 36

MYSELF: You actually propose "Laugh and grow fat" though laughing never makes one fat!

SRI AUROBINDO: You oppose one of the most ancient traditions of humanity by this severe statement. But your statement is mistaken even according to Science. We are now told that it is the activity of certain glands that makes you thin or fat. If glands, then why not gladness?

MYSELF: Very strange, Sir, that you don't have a single intelligent chap in the species of your Supramental race to be! On what do you build your hopes, please?

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me, you said intelligence and interest. You might find one of these separately, but how do you hope to get them combined together? Anyhow, we can't hunt for the kind of animal you want, you yourself should take up the chase.

11. 3. 36

MYSELF: Herewith C's letter. He wants to change his residence. But if he goes to a Mohamedan mess, it would be from the frying pan into the fire. However, he wants your opinion. Have you any to offer?

SRI AUROBINDO: Have no opinion to offer. Don't very well understand the proposed culinary operation. He is going to earn Rs.10 and spend 14 — and on the top of that bring his mother — to live with him in a Mohamedan mess? It sounds very modern — but too much of a mess. Irish stew — what?

MYSELF: What has happened to my typescript, Sir? Hibernating?

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, if you saw me nowadays with my nose to paper from afternoon to morning, deciphering, deciphering, writing, writing, writing, even the rocky heart of a disciple would be touched and you would not talk about typescripts and hibernation. I have given up (for the present at least) the attempt to minimise the cataract of correspondence; I accept my fate like Raman Maharshi with the plague of prasads and admirers, but at least don't add anguish to annihilation by talking about typescripts!

MYSELF: Something is enclosed in the bag. Good enough, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very nice. But these things are generally somewhere else when one needs them.

13. 3. 36

MYSELF: I let go the typescript, but the poem? How can I allow you to break your promise, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: Break a promise? Who's going to do that? No time was fixed — so the promise can be fulfilled, say in 1997. If you say you are not likely to be

alive then, nor I either — well, our heirs can complete the transaction.

MYSELF: What is the use of your complaining, Sir? You have committed the grave blunder of coming into this sorrowful world with a mighty magical pen. Sri Krishna, I conjecture, may have complained about his lungs because of his incessant blowing and fluting to melt our hearts!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is an idea! Strange that none of the poets has mentioned it — a modernist poet would catch it at once. "The Flute and the Lungs" or "Krishna's Bronchitis."

MYSELF: U's tumour can be operated upon under local anaesthetic. Now all this question of operation is useless, because he says he is afraid. After all he has no discomfort and neither is it very big, he says, so let it be. Only I was thinking that if it grows bigger, as undoubtedly it will, unless your Force prevents it, what will be done then?

SRI AUROBINDO: No use doing it if he is afraid. Let us wait on the Gods and hope they won't increase the lipoma till it deserves a diploma for its size. An American skyscraper on the neck would be obviously inconvenient.

14. 3. 36

MYSELF: What Sir, in your letter on 'Swan and its Symbol', *expect* has become *except*? Supramental slip, hurrah!

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you mean to say this is the first you have met? I used to make ten per page formerly in the haste of my writing. Evidently I am arriving towards a supramental accuracy — spontaneous and careless in spite of the lightning speed of my epistolary movement.

MYSELF: Freed once more from the Devil's claws ! Just a few words about the process: I took up X's poem, felt like writing one after reading it, failed; then went to Pranam, there found J's letter waiting, read it and as soon as I sat in the Hall, lo, everything fell off ! What then did the job — poem or letter ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, of course, it was the Old Man of the Sea, I mean of Sorrows, who dropped off because he can't stand anything cheerful and hopeful. The main credit goes to the letter, because it has a push in it of the psychic force which took your vital and the O. M. also by surprise and knocked him off and you up by surprise before the vital had time to turn round and cry, "Hélas ! Hélas ! Alas ! हाय हाय !¹ Ototototoi !"

All together — Poetry first attempt, letter brought a good atmosphere (that was the sense of something pleasant) and both were the effect of a long pressure from me which you had resisted sitting firm in a Gandhian passive resistance.

MYSELF: This shows, Sir, that you make us suffer unnecessarily; you can at any moment draw me out if it pleases you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all, you can't be drawn out if something in you refuses and sticks like a badger in its hole. When that says, "Oh, damn it, after all let me get out and breathe some fresh air," then it can be done.

MYSELF: I don't understand what my friend J means by the disturbance in connection with the affairs of the world.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is clear enough.... You can feel your friend's atmosphere through the letter "so beautiful, so strengthening, so refreshing" and it has an immediate effect on you. But your mind stares like an owl and won-

¹ Alas, alas!

ders "What the hell can this be?", I suppose, because your medical books never told you about it and how can things be true which are not known either to the ordinary mind or science? It is by an incursion of an opposite kind of forces that you fall into the Old Man's clutches, but you can only groan and cry, "What's this?" and when they are swept aside in a moment by other forces, blink and mutter, "Well, that's funny!" Your friend can feel and know at once when he is being threatened by the opposite forces and so he can be on his guard and resist old Nick, because he can detect at once one of his principal means of attack.

MYSELF: Give me a beautiful 'beating', Sir, will you? Have not had it for a long time!

SRI AUROBINDO: Have given you one or two smacks. No time to make it long.

20. 3. 36

MYSELF: Did you say 'Old Man of the Sea'?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

MYSELF: But why sea, Sir? Any allusion?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, traditionally, it is, I believe old man of the mountains, but there were no mountains here, only a sea of sobs and sorrows — so I had to vary the phrase.

21. 3. 36

MYSELF: In this verse of yours 'Over the lone heights in the still air roamed,' roamed what, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: How the deuce am I to know? I wrote what came as a metrical example and the roamer did not come in view.

MYSELF: Whatever you touch becomes so beautiful, Sir. The line is roaming and humming in my mind. Oh if you could complete it! Don't say 'Some day', Sir, which

is equivalent to 'never' !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if not some day, some night, perhaps.

23. 3. 36

SRI AUROBINDO: René is sending me charts of the fever temperature of his cousin Bidrunnissa (an Ashram nomenclature) who has been suffering from typhoid, enteric (so the Colonel Doctor of Hyderabad says), with affection of chest which was suspected to be pneumonia. Now in his first chart the figures were 104°, 103°, 102°, 101° and an uninstructed layman could understand — but what are these damned medical hieroglyphs 30-112, 26-118, E 24-110, 24-110 ?

24. 3. 36

MYSELF: About the 'damned hieroglyphs' you don't understand, though I don't understand why you don't. If you only read Sherlock Holmes' science of deduction and analysis which I have done lately, you would have at once realised my remarks.

SRI AUROBINDO: Sherlock Holmes arranges his facts beforehand and then detects them unlike the doctors.

MYSELF: Well, keep the chart vertical then it should at once be clear to you that the red line is the normal temperature line — 98.6, and the fever would be about 101.8. Then the figures below, what would they be ? Well, your long association with doctors should have taught you that in a fever chart pulse rate is recorded with the temperature.

SRI AUROBINDO: Never gave me one, so far as I remember; I mean not of this problematic kind.

MYSELF: If that be so, between those pairs of damned figures one must be of pulse and which is it ? Surely not 30, 26 because with that rate no charts would have been

sent to you !

SRI AUROBINDO: Naturally, I knew it must be the pulse, but what were the unspeakable 30s and 24s attached to them ? And I didn't want the pulse, I wanted the temperature. However your red line which I had not noticed sheds a new light on the matter, so that is clear now. I was holding it horizontal because of its inordinate length.

MYSELF: What are these 30, 26 and 24 and 24 then ? Just a little bit of cool thinking would again point out, Sir, that they are respiration rates — normal being 20, 22 or so. Now is it simple and easy or is it not ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, it is not. What's the normal respiration rate anyhow ? 32 below zero or 106 above ? (N. B. zero not Fahrenheit but Breathen-height.)

MYSELF: Can you say the same thing about your yogic hieroglyphs ? By Jove, no !

SRI AUROBINDO: There are no hieroglyphs in Yoga except the dreams and vision-symbols and nobody is expected to understand these things. But what about E ? Extravagant ? Eccentric ? *Epatant* ?

MYSELF: And I give you only one instance in the other book. Let the Sherlockian vein be pardoned. One independent criticism: I don't know how they suspect pneumonia with a respiration rate of only 30, 26. It should bound up to at least 40. Instead, with a temperature of 102°, it is only 24 !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, both the doctors did that and one is a mighty man there, the Doctor of Doctors. But perhaps it's the fashion in Hyderabad to breathe like that when one has pneumonia. Anyhow pn. seems to have dropped out of the picture, and the 'D of Ds' tells only of typhoid and a possible re-activity of inactive germs of tuberculosis.

MYSELF: I have at last written a poem, Sir. I have avoided anapaests as far as possible.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have brought some in, but without

any impure intention — they just came.

MYSELF: Today Mother said something to me during Pranam — something more than 'said'. I searched in my mind, heart and body — what is it I have done !

SRI AUROBINDO: She didn't; she only looked at you a little longer than usual.

MYSELF: I can take any amount of thrashing with grace, as you have had enough evidence by now, but to take it without knowing the why or how of it, goes a little too deep, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: No thrashing at all — not even the natural yearning to thrash you.

MYSELF: For an earthly reason, I found that I have accepted an invitation for lunch. Is that why Mother focussed her fury on my dread soul ? or is the reason unearthly ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Knew nothing about it. Never dreamed even of the lunch — was thinking of B — not of any delinquency of yours.

MYSELF: You can't say there was nothing, for I was positively conscious that there was something.

SRI AUROBINDO: I can and do.

MYSELF: I was positively conscious that there was something and I want to know it if only to rectify.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only fancy, sir, dear delightful fancy. Nothing more deceiving than these pseudo-intuitions of Mother's displeasure and search for its non-existent reasons. Very often it comes from a guilty conscience or a feeling that one deserves a thrashing, so obviously a thrashing must be intended. Anything like that here ?

MYSELF: The word 'focus' was unintelligible ? But you understand all right. I adopt the device and 'your attention' to save your time and mine as well, as it is obvious.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good God ! Is this Hebrew or Aramaic or Swahili ? I can't understand a word. Which device ? Which attention ? Some reference to something I

wrote ? If so, it has clean gone out of my head. That by the way is a manner of speaking, for I have never anything in my head.

25. 3. 36

MYSELF: I chuckled, Sir, to learn that you held the fever chart horizontally, because of its length ! and E is neither of those high-sounding "extravagant" words. If you had just looked about you for a moment, lifting your eyes from the correspondence, you would have discovered that E stands for nothing but a simple evening; clear ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. What has evening to do with it ? Evening star ? "Twinkle, twinkle, evening star ! How I wonder what your temperatures are ?" But I suppose Sir James Jeans knows and doesn't wonder. But anyhow E for Evening sounds both irrelevant and poetic.

MYSELF: I am sorry for the last elision again — I wanted to write: I adopted the device and dropped your attention to save time — I find that I have dropped the word 'dropped' altogether and so it became Hebrew, Aramaic or — ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Swahili. African language, sir, somewhere in West Africa.

MYSELF: There you are then, Sir ! You admit that Mother did look at me a little longer than usual — that's a point gained !

SRI AUROBINDO: Just Jehovah, man ! What of that ? Can't Mother look longer without being furious ?

MYSELF: But quarrel over over that.

SRI AUROBINDO [underlining the above sentence]: Another ellipsis ? or a collapse ? It sounds like a line of poetry.

MYSELF: Or is it about that affair I wrote to you long ago and got a smack ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Consider yourself smacked this time also.

MYSELF: Nothing criminal or incriminating — still enough perhaps to make the heart throb. Even my fancy is only a fancy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Fancy ? fudge ! It was only a movement of the hormones.

MYSELF: A guilty conscience, a criminal conscience, well, that's about the size of it. Thrashing, fury I accept all if that was what it was for.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was not. As there was no thrashing and no fury, it could not be for that.

MYSELF: I am obliged to sleep out for a few days because of repairs in our house. The whole building is smelling of lime, lime, lime.

SRI AUROBINDO: If you want to be a real Yogi, go on sniffing and sniffing at the lime till the smell creates an ecstasy in the nose and you realise that all smells and stinks are sweet and beautiful with the sweetness and beauty of the Brahman.

26. 3. 36

MYSELF: No, Sir, it is not at all irrelevant, though poetic. I swear it is Evening. You know they take these pulse and respiration rates Morning and Evening of which M and E are shorthand and one of which I suppose you will make mad and the other one of the three you have divined ! But what is this Jones — knows and doesn't wonder ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Jeans, Jeans, Jeans — not Jones !

Sir James Jeans, sir, who knows all about the temperatures, weights and other family details of the stars, including E.

27. 3. 36

MYSELF: Friend C again, with his woeful tale !

SRI AUROBINDO: What a fellow ! He blunders through

life stumbling over every possible or impossible stone of offence with a conscientious thoroughness that is unimaginable and inimitable.

MYSELF: He has sent a rupee to buy something for you. But your needs are so few and you are so strict about hygiene. At times I wonder why the Divine is so meticulously particular as regards contagion, infection. Is he vulnerable to the virus, bacilli, microbes, etc. ?

SRI AUROBINDO: And why on earth should you expect the Divine to feed himself on germs and bacilli and poisons of all kinds ? Singular theology yours !

MYSELF:

So what shall I buy
To suit the Divine taste ?
But aren't all same to him — paste
Or pudding, butter, cheese or mutton-pie ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! I hope you are not plotting to send any such things here ! Of butter and cheese I have more than I want and pudding and mutton-pie are banished from my menu.

MYSELF: I hear from all quarters that you are buried in letters. In the near future there will be millions of letters heaped upon your supramental segregation, if you don't relinquish it and come out boldly !

SRI AUROBINDO: Come out and have millions and millions of admirers heaped upon my promiscuity ? Thank you for nothing ! The letters can be thrown into the W. P. B. more easily than the admirers can be thrown out of the window.

28. 3. 36

MYSELF: By the way, I think fountain-pen ink would be the thing I can buy for you, with C's one rupee.

SRI AUROBINDO: No. Mother says we have f. p. ink in plenty — I won't say gallons and seas but still. Besides, the same ink is to be used always for the pen,

otherwise it gets spoiled.

29. 3. 36

MYSELF: My hard labour and effort deprive me of the joy of creation and discourage me with a dread of the work. You say that this is because I am an "efforter" and a "hower". Well, show me then the Grand Trunk Road of non-effort.

SRI AUROBINDO: There are two ways of arriving at the Grand Trunk Road. One is to climb and struggle and effortise (like the pilgrim who traverses India prostrating and measuring the way with his body — that's the way of effort). One day you suddenly find yourself on the G.T.R. when you least expect it. The other is to quiet the mind to such a point that a greater Mind of mind can speak through it. (I am not here talking of the Supramental). You will do neither. Your mind refuses to be quiet — your vital kicks at the necessity of effort. One too active, the other too lazy. How can I show you the G.T.R. when you refuse either way of reaching it?

MYSELF: I have resorted to prayer. Well, if a prayer means a call to the Above, why doesn't the Above have the kindness to respond, especially when it is just on the other side of my street? The Above being so close and concrete, I can't understand the lack of response.

SRI AUROBINDO: But just answer! If it responded to everybody in all circumstances, there would by this time be 100 million poets writing away for all they were worth, let us say 1000 pages of poetry a day each and publishing them. Wouldn't it be a disaster? Wouldn't such kindness be a cruelty to all the rest of the creation?

MYSELF: Your letter to D has done us a lot of good, for you have cited the example of workers there. We people need such illustrations but not of your illustrious person or the Mother's.

SRI AUROBINDO: You people are funny people!

MYSELF: Throughout the history of my writing, you know that the Above has been stingily charitable to me so that all my works — very few though — have been corroded with the marks of my labour. But even a beginner should be lured by more glimpses than has been done in my case.

SRI AUROBINDO: System of lollipops? You won't travel to London unless you are given frequent glimpses of London before even you reach Bombay? Otherwise you will say oh! what a bother and give up?

MYSELF: Look at D — you yourself have admitted that he had a very easy flow as soon as he started writing.

SRI AUROBINDO: Never in my life I admitted that.

MYSELF: Look at N. Do you know he writes 200-300 lines a day!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all if you refer to his poetry — As soon as he started writing here, yes. That is because he caught instantly the tail of the Horse — or the Force. You seem to read what I write in a queer way.

MYSELF: With your silent consciousness it should be possible to draw inspiration from the highest planes with the least concentration.

SRI AUROBINDO: The highest planes are not so accommodating as all that. If they were so, why should it be so difficult to bring down and organise the Supermind in the physical consciousness? What happy-go-lucky fancy-web-spinning ignoramuses you all are! You speak of silence, consciousness, overmental, supramental, etc., as if they were so many electric buttons you have only to press and there you are. It may be one day but meanwhile I have to discover everything about the working of all possible modes of electricity, all the laws, possibilities, perils, etc., construct modes of connection and communication, make the whole far-wiring system, try to find out how it can be made foolproof and all that in the course of a single lifetime. And I have to do it while my blessed disciples are firing off their gay or gloomy *a priori* rea-

sonings at me from a position of entire irresponsibility and expecting me to divulge everything to them not in hints but at length. Lord God *in omnibus* !

31. 3. 36

MYSELF: I was not at all speaking of the world, neither am I concerned with it. I was asking why my prayers were not answered by the Above when that Above is on the other side of my house and encourages my writing.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! you are not a part of the world ? Then you must be a Jivanmukta and no need of prayer.

The Above may encourage your writing, but it does not follow that he will deal with you in the same way as with X: যে যথা নাং প্রদ্যন্তে ।¹

MYSELF: I admit that my vital is lazy, because it is afraid of too much labouring, 4 lines in 40 hours !

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but if the vital were not lazy you would not have to labour like that. It is lazy in labouring but it is also lazy in responding — it is a slow mover.

MYSELF: Do you want to say that if I have discovered some lines I must not think of the next lines, but try instead to keep absolutely silent ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the ideal way; but usually there is always an activity of the mind jumping up and trying to catch the inspiration. Sometimes the inspiration, the right one, comes in the midst of this futile jumping, sometimes it sweeps it aside and brings in the right thing, sometimes it asserts itself between two blunders, sometimes it waits till the noise quiets down. But even this jumping need not be a mental effort — it is often only a series of suggestions, the mind itself seizing on one or eliminating another, not by laborious thinking and choice, but by a quiet series of perceptions. This is me-

¹ As men approach Me.

thod No. 2. No. 3 is your Herculean way, quite the slowest and worst.

MYSELF: You once brought in "the organisation of the Supermind in the physical consciousness" while writing about your poetic inspiration. What is the connection between the two?

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me, it was you who brought in Overmind etc. in connection with my poetry and asked why having these things I had to write *Savitri* many times instead of pouring out 24,000 lines a day.

1. 4. 36

MYSELF: I have worked today from 1.30 to 6.15 — 5 hours! and composed only 16 lines! Is this a sign of laziness?

SRI AUROBINDO: But that is quite magnificent — 16 lines in one day, $3\frac{1}{5}$ lines an hour about! Remember that Virgil used only to write 9 lines a day. At this rate you will end by being twice as inspired and fluent as Virgil.

2. 4. 36

MYSELF: Please do write something tonight, Sir. I request you, I beseech you, I entreat you, I pray to you. Do pick out my letter from your heap — I can see it from here — and just a few marks and remarks will do. That is like the Divine! Give that time you would have spent on the long letter I was hoping to write, but I suspended it for getting this chance!

SRI AUROBINDO: Sorry but your luck is not brilliant. Had a whole night — i.e. after 3 no work — was ready to write. Light went off in my rooms only, mark — tried candle power, no go. The Age of Candles is evidently over. So "requests, beseeches, entreats" were all in vain. Not my fault. Blame Fate. However I had a delightful

time, 3 hours of undisturbed concentration on my real work — a luxury denied to me for ages. Don't tear your hair. Will be done another day with luck.

3. 4. 36

MYSELF: Yes, I was almost going to tear my hair, but your 'delightful time' prevented me from doing it. But I hold Jotin's reply till Sunday after which I will tear my hair.

SRI AUROBINDO: Preserve it — preserve your precious hair. Be calm, be patient !

MYSELF: I don't understand whether it is the yogic or accommodation trouble that stands in the way of putting them together.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who is "them", your hairs ? What an abrupt Tacitean writer you are.

MYSELF: Tomorrow is the 4th of April ! We are commemorating it thus: Nishikanta sends a big poem — splendid, exquisite. By Jove, what a flow and what a poem ! Do read it at once, Sir and let the correspondence go to H — for once !

SRI AUROBINDO: Correspondence can't be sent to H either way, unless the light goes out — and then where will the poems go ?

4. 4. 36

MYSELF: By the way, Sir, you couldn't write to me because your lights went off. I thought you have a kerosene lamp with a pumping business and burner — God knows the name.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who gives these wonderful news ?

Of course I have a lamp but it is not available at 2.30. Do you think I am going to wake up the whole house at that hour ?

MYSELF: I intended long ago to procure one for your

emergency use. Shall I try? That would only crush all your chances for a 'delightful time'!

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, no pumping business for me!

MYSELF: But concentration on *real work*? Good Lord, you do that from 9 or 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. God alone knows what you do then.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this transcendental rubbish?

MYSELF: Perhaps you send Force to Germany, Abyssinia — or a leap to Supramental?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is not my real work. Who except the devil is going to give force to Germans? Do you think I am in liaison with Hitler and his howling tribe of Nazis?

MYSELF: We speculate and speculate. Next, you concentrate from 6 p.m. to 11 or 12. Still not enough?

SRI AUROBINDO: Who gave you this wonderful programme? Invented it all by your ingenious self? From 4 p.m. - 6.30 p.m. afternoon correspondence, newspapers. Evening correspondence 7 or 7.30 - 9 p.m. From 9 - 10 concentration, 10 - 12 correspondence. 12 - 2.30 bath, meal, rest. 2.30 - 5 or 6 a.m. correspondence unless I am lucky. Where is the sufficient time for concentration?

MYSELF: You gave no remark on the poem. You see all our values depend on how you appraise them. If Mother smiles at somebody we think him good; if she doesn't, well...!

SRI AUROBINDO: What a coupling of disparates! What a blunder! Don't you know that the Divine smiles equally on the wicked and the good together?

MYSELF: I hope you didn't intend to make me an April-fool when you wrote that 'Virgil used to write only 9 lines a day'. Otherwise Virgil and Nirod to be mentioned in the same pen-stroke!

SRI AUROBINDO [in pencil]: What a modest poet! Most think themselves the superior of Homer, Milton and Shakespeare all added together.

MYSELF: Again a boil on the left cheek. Good Hea-

vens ! No improvement.

SRI AUROBINDO: As René's doctor says. "Tut tut tut tut tut tut !"

MYSELF: Punishment for too much talking or eating or subconscious welling out ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably.

5. 4. 36

MYSELF: What did you write in pencil, Sir ? Absolutely unreadable ! Even Nolini couldn't read it, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: I repeat then from memory. What a modest poet ! Most think in their heart of hearts that they are superior to Homer, Virgil, Milton and Shakespeare all piled upon and fused into each other.

MYSELF:

Boil a little ripe, but still —
Hard and big as hazel-nut,
In spite of your tut, tut, tut !
Give one more dose at the least
Or I howl on like a beast !

SRI AUROBINDO: Tut nut tut, not nut tut tut !

Hope this will have the effect of a Tantric mantra which it resembles. So if you like OM ling *bling* hring kring ! Just try repeating either of these 15,000 times concentrating on your boil (*bling*) at the time.

6. 4. 36

MYSELF: Hard, throbbing painful boil. Slight fever, headache in the morning. Hot fomentation etc. Went to the 'miracle doctor', 4 powders ! Added to these the Force ! Does it budge ? The game must be over tomorrow, Sir. Otherwise I have to lie flat !

SRI AUROBINDO: All this for a poor little boil ? What would it be if you were put to roast ?

By the way, what do you mean by deceiving me about

E in the Hyderabad fever chart? René wrote that E is the entry in the "Motions" column; it evidently means enema. Poetry indeed! Sunset colours indeed! Enema, sir! Motions, sir! Compared with that, ling bling is epically poetic.

7. 4. 36

MYSELF: I beg your pardon, Sir! Enema didn't strike me at all. But I hope it didn't make any difference in the working of your Force unless you enematised the patient too much. It is a pleasure to learn that one can deceive the Divine, however!

SRI AUROBINDO: If the Divine chooses to be deceived, anyone can deceive him — just as he can run away from the battle, পলায়নরূপি। You are evidently not up to the tricks of the Lila.

MYSELF: What would it be if I were put to roast? A. K. is rubbing hard his formula everyday saying — Very difficult, very difficult, this Yoga! Now your threat comes. If it comes to that, I shall exclaim: *Guru-pada-padmāya, namo namaḥ!*¹

SRI AUROBINDO: Why singular? A respected person is supposed to have more than 2 feet — witness the formula — শ্রীচরণেষু।²

MYSELF: But let me add that my roasting has already begun, not in your spiritual oven, but in the barometric oven. Dilip and myself have decided to cycle off to the Lake in the early hours of the morning. As it is not possible to get a cycle from outside at that hour, what about one from here? And this time it's not a 'melancholiac' that asks but a maniac, you may say!

SRI AUROBINDO: Melancholomaniac.

Can't ask Benjamin for a cycle at that time. He would eat our heads off and yours too. This cycle-mania is be-

¹ Salutations to the lotus feet of the Guru.

² At the respected feet.

coming too epidemic — we won't be able to supply at that rate.

MYSELF: My boil has burst today ! Swelling less, pain none but still it is oozing and oozing. By tomorrow it will be over, I hope.

SRI AUROBINDO: R has written to me insisting that you should continue the treatment for a fortnight even after the oozing is past history so as to erect a barrier against further boilings.

8. 4. 36

MYSELF: The yoga they follow at Dayalbag is the 'Semi-secret Yoga of Sound'. What's this new business again ? Sahabji Maharaj¹ says a current of sound was the first activity of the Supreme Being at the beginning of creation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not new at all — as old as the Himalayas. You seem to be remarkably ignorant of the past history of Yoga in India. It is only a specialised statement of the general Tantric theory of the Seed Sounds. Something like my OM Tut tut tut bling kring which you refused to try. If you had — .

MYSELF: He says that Kabir also taught Sound-Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: The basic idea is at least three thousand years older than Kabir. It is simply a big name for the use of the mantra.

MYSELF: The most important part is supposed to be the pineal gland; it is designated as the seat of the spirit entity in man.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ancient, ancient, very ancient ! The Theosophists, I believe, made a big noise about the pineal gland.

MYSELF: It is said that if you shoot a man through this gland, he instantaneously dies. When the spirit entity leaves the gland and passes upwards through the grey

¹ The Head of Radhaswami Fraternity.

matter, it comes in contact with the universal mind; then passing through the white matter it enters in contact with lofty spiritual realities.

SRI AUROBINDO: So he does if you shoot him in other places, the heart for instance. So the spirit entity is there too ?

MYSELF: When this spirit entity recedes from that gland, the conditions of dream, deep sleep or trance supervene, and when finally it leaves the gland, the body falls dead.

SRI AUROBINDO: Christ !! But how can it recede without leaving the gland ?

MYSELF: I read in a book that the soul dwells somewhere in the brain; is the soul the same as this entity residing in the pineal ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Maybe. But the soul is also supposed to be somewhere in or behind the heart, i.e., cardiac centre.... God knows and perhaps X also. I don't, I have no idea. Never bothered about the pineal gland. In fact my spirit entity "receded from" it, even "finally left" it long ago without my dying — at least I seem to myself to be alive still....

If the Radhaswami affirmations are meant to be another kind of language expressing certain psycho-physical experiences I have no objection. But why all this pineal glandism and talk about entities and bullets ?

N. B. If I say the Purusha is in the heart, do I mean it is there in the physical heart, tumbling about in the flow of the blood or stuck in the valves or the muscular portions and when a bullet is lodged in the heart it jumps up with an Ooah ! and tumbles down dead or goes off skating and swimming into some grey or white matter worlds beyond ? Certainly not. I am using a significant language which expresses certain relations between the psychic consciousness and the physical of which we become aware by Yoga.

9. 4. 36

MYSELF: My big photo requires Sanjiban's treatment. Granted permission ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What ? which ? where ? how ? what disease ? what medicine wanted ?

MYSELF: Amrita says no water should drain into the street except rain water. But we have to wash frequently the Dispensary courtyard as it's too hot. What's the solution of the impasse ?

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is for coolness, sprinkling ought to be sufficient. Why Noah's flood in a dispensary courtyard merely for antidoting heat ?

10. 4. 36

MYSELF: By 'my big photo', I meant your photo which would be drawn by Sanjiban.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are always plunging me into new mysteries. If it is a photo how can it be "drawn" by anybody ? And what is the tense, connotation and psychological and metaphysical annotation of "would be" here ?

MYSELF: You see the photo is being eaten up by insects, so it has to be treated. So all interrogations answered permission granted ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

Why did you stop *your* treatment — or rather R's ?

MYSELF: Did you really want me to chant that mantra ? I took it as a big piece of joke.

SRI AUROBINDO: You couldn't realise that Tut Tut Tut was a serious mantra with immense possibilities ? Why, it is the modern form of तत् and everybody knows that ॐ तत् सत्¹ is a mantra of great power. Only you should as a penance for not having accepted at once, do it not

¹ Om tat sat.

15,000 but 150,000 times a day — at a gallop, e.g. OM Tut a Tut Tut a Tut Tut a Tut and so on at an increasing pace and pitch till you reach either Berhampur² or Nirvana.

MYSELF: I am not only ignorant about all things spiritual, atma, yog-biyog etc. but they are as nauseating to me as quinine which I had to gulp. And see the trick of Fate, it is such things now that I am called upon to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are justly punished — but what is yog-biyog? I thought that had to do with mathematics, not spiritual philosophy.

MYSELF: Is it for nothing that I see the Red Light as the outcome of my misadventure?

SRI AUROBINDO: Take courage. Say Tut tut tut to the misadventure and go ahead.

11. 4. 36

MYSELF: I am afraid to go to R for treatment for I hear he has been rather too free with his hands and mouth lately!

SRI AUROBINDO: Are you referring to the baptism of S? What has that got to do with treatment?

12. 4. 36

MYSELF: Since we are talking about R, let me relate to you another incident. S had borrowed my copy of a book and avowed that R had taken it from him and never returned it. When asked, he flatly denied. He had also taken S's dictionary. I am really amazed!

SRI AUROBINDO: What is there amazing? My experience is that in India more people than not keep the books of others and feel under no obligation to return them.

MYSELF: But could it be that S himself presented it to R and at the last moment drew back due to some

¹ A place famous for its mental hospital.

hitch? But S is not the man to present anybody with anything. A riddle, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite possible. S is capable of anything; so is R — The difference in that respect between them is that R has a good side in him and that he is conscious of that large share in himself of what he calls “the pig and tiger instincts.”

MYSELF: What does your newspaper say about Abyssinia? Another black country swallowed by the whites; prayers, entreaties to God of no avail! The devils are too strong for God? What?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why all this sentimental fury? This and worse has been happening ever since mankind replaced and improved on the ape and tiger. So long as men are what they are these things will happen. What do you expect God to do about it? The Abyssinians have conquered others, Italy conquers the Abyssinians, other people have conquered the Italians and they will probably be sat upon again hereafter. It is the Law, sir, and the Great Wheel and everything else. Keep your head cool in the heat. If you want to change things, you have to change humanity first and I can assure you, you will find it a job — yes, even to change 150 people in an Ashram and get them to surmount their instincts.

MYSELF: You will perhaps say that justice, retribution will come in time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, why should I say such things? Was I ever a moralist or a preacher? Justice was never the determining factor in a war.

MYSELF: S, the head mason, has been having headache and vomiting for the last 2 years. Seems to be due to dietetic indiscretion, but queer that it persists so long.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably persistence due to want of dieting. Most impossible to diet a Tamilian — too many spices and things.

14. 4. 36

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, couldn't finish what I began with your other book, so kept it. Will see tonight if Time and the Gods are favourable. Pray to them meanwhile.

15. 4. 36

MYSELF: What, Sir, mistake? Where is my medical report book? Wrong book has been sent!

SRI AUROBINDO: Kept the wrong book. (Reminds me of the Sultan of Johara who when the Englishmen on board his ship were inveighing in fury against the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie by an Indian, wanted to sympathise, and moaned with "Very bad! very bad! shot the wrong man!")

16. 4. 36

MYSELF: The trouble is that I can't tell X all that I think of her poetry, so I keep silent; whereas she goes on with her flourishes.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, let her flourish while you maintain a wise silence!

18. 4. 36

MYSELF: V is suffering from a simple pharyngitis — if that also must run its course of about 4 to 5 days, then the Force is playing the same part as the medicines — if at all, Sir, I am thinking. Feels wretched. Begg for Mother's Grace and Force. Is it coming?

SRI AUROBINDO: V's illness is that? However simple, not surprising he should be wretched.... Is he receiving it?

Think on! Think hard! Think, brothers, think!

19. 4. 36

MYSELF: Why, Sir, seems you don't read the reports well ! I told you V's was a congested throat — that means tonsils, pharynx — everything, and you ask pharyngitis ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Then why do you say a simple pharyngitis when it is "everything" under the sun ?

MYSELF: I am feeling worried about H, Sir. He is absolutely stationary ! He also doesn't receive the Force ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Never did except by an occasional accident of which he immediately repents.

20. 4. 36

MYSELF: On what does the success of a doctor depend, so far as he himself is concerned ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Immense energy, enthusiasm, vital force, 100 miles an hour determination to succeed and a 2000 horse power confidence, "I will do it", vital absolutely convinced of the force, and constantly finding reasons for belief in it (not as you and others do equally or more, admitting reasons against); rapid intuitions getting there in spite of many errors of speculation, decision of mind and will accompanied by a mobile and plastic observing mind adapting itself to the circumstances and then overcoming them — that's the secret of a powerful instrumentalism at least in a rajasic man. A sattwic fellow would do it also but on other lines. You — ahem !

MYSELF: R cures cancer in 10 days, goitre in 2 weeks and diabetes in 7 days !

SRI AUROBINDO: Hello ! 10 days ?

MYSELF: How is it that my patients go on lingering and lingering even under a trifling thing ? Some don't receive Force, others repent it, others receiving have no effect ! Doctor in the same boat as the patients ? When

will you put me on "Queen Mary" ?

SRI AUROBINDO: When will you walk in ? Very dawdling and deliberate gait, sir !

21. 4. 36

MYSELF: What about asking R to take up B. P.'s trachoma case ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I would rather not for the moment. R has A on his hands, two heavy luggages still in the town and other lighter items.

MYSELF: Even if acquired by Yoga, won't there be a difference between the instrumentation of the one born with them and the other who has acquired them ?

SRI AUROBINDO: There may be a difference, but this is after all not a competitive examination. If one can be a good and strong instrument, that is enough.

MYSELF: I hoped that the Force would drop in one day and dynamise the being. That illusion has gone. Now I find that I shall have to work for it, till one day, one year, one decade my labour culminates in what I hope for.

SRI AUROBINDO: "One century, one millennium" — be complete, please, in your enumeration !

That is just it. It is the "slowly slowly" mind and "let us consider all the facts and reason the whole thing and its possibilities and impossibilities" mind that stands in your way.

MYSELF: You have said to X that my natural bent is pessimistic. But why then is there such an ambition, such an aspiration to be pure and perfect in life as well as in literature, in my role as doctor no less than in other roles ? Psychologically the doctor himself is rather a patient !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is two different portions of your being. One wants to climb mountains, the other which stands at the foot or is climbing or rather being hauled

up the first steps of the ascent, pulls back, groans, grunts, growls, wails and cries "That ? all that height ? Tchah ! pooh ! I'll never be able to negotiate one ten thousandth part of that ! Let me sit down and lament."

22. 4. 36

MYSELF: By Jove, Sir, that handwriting of yours is a brilliantly unique specimen ! So I have to send back the notebook ! Well, but what's the cure ? That impossible mantra which you gave me I am trying it though by fits and starts.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! What mantra ? OM Tut a tut to to tuwhit tuwhoo ? Man ! But it is to be recited only when you are taking tea in the company of four Brahmins pure of all sex ideas and 5 ft. 7 inches tall with a stomach in proportion. Otherwise it can't be effective.

MYSELF: Waiting patiently for the blue moon, should I all the while cry out 'damn it, damn it !' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: But that's another mantra. One for which the blue moon has a special dislike.

MYSELF: I have checked one wave so far. Any more coming on the top of it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Wave of what ? Wave of glooms ? Wave of poetry ? Wave of the blues ? For heaven's sake write comprehensibly !

MYSELF: Is it really an illusion I am cherishing that the Force will some day galvanise the consciousness ? What do you say about this some day ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it is an admirable exercise in faith ! As for the result, some day, one day, many days, no day — why bother ? যা কলেন্দু কদাচন ।¹

¹ Hanker never after results.

23. 4. 36

MYSELF: Please ask Mother to give some blessings to this hopeless self.

SRI AUROBINDO:

R/

Vin. Ashirv.	m.VII
Recept. Chlor.	gr.XXV
Aqua jollity	ad.lib.
Tinc. Faith	m.XV
Syr. Opt.	Zss
12 doses every hour	

(Signature)

24. 4. 36

MYSELF: What's this second item in your prescription, Sir? Too Latinic for my poor knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO: Chlorate of Receptivity.

MYSELF: And I would put Aqua at the end to make it an absolutely pucca academical prescription.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but I thought of the two last ingredients afterwards.

MYSELF: And 12 doses every hour — these tinctures and vinums?

SRI AUROBINDO: 12 doses - - every hour (one each hour. Plagiarised from your language, sir.)

MYSELF: Where is the cost to be supplied from?

SRI AUROBINDO: Gratis — for the poor.

MYSELF: I have composed a sort of a poem:

“Once swayed unmeasured insolent hopes in my
breast:

Melting like snows heaped upon Himalaya-crest
Songs of my glory would o'erflow land and sea
In tempestuous floods bursting the limits of
Eternity....”

Too grandiloquent ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. But, man alive, what is the metre ? It seems to be neither pentameter fish, nor lyrical red herring. I have turned it into alexandrine.

25. 4. 36

MYSELF: In one letter you spoke of fictitious stresses in my poetry. What is meant by them ? Could you not illustrate them in a poem ? I am enclosing a *carte blanche* for the purpose.

SRI AUROBINDO: I meant simply stresses which are conventionally supposed to be there for the sake of the metre. What are you dreaming of, sir ? A poem as an illustration of my bit of prosodic grammar ? Inspiration would run away to Pelion and never return if I did such a shocking thing. I am keeping your *carte blanche*, but the odds are that it may be fitted to quite another purpose.

27. 4. 36

MYSELF: What poem, you ask ? Good Lord ! Didn't I request you to compose a poem illustrating some points of prosody ? Already forgotten ? If the Guru is so forgetful, the shishya can be worse !

SRI AUROBINDO: And didn't I tell you that it was an extravagant and unwarrantable idea to demand a poem for such a grammatical purpose and I kept the *carte blanche* that I might use it for other purposes ? What's this shishya who does not read his Guru's objurgations however illegible ? !

MYSELF: Somebody writing the life of Confucius in Bengali says: "Why do Dharma-gurus marry, we can't understand. Buddha did and his wife's tale is heart-rending.... Sri Aurobindo, though not a dharma-guru but dharma-mad, has done it too...." Well, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it is better to be ধর্মপাগল¹ than to be a sententious ass and pronounce on what one doesn't understand.

MYSELF: "We feel so sad about his wife, so too about the wife of Confucius."

SRI AUROBINDO: Poor sorrowful fellows !

MYSELF: "It is the same about Con. He had even a son and two daughters."

SRI AUROBINDO: Who is this gentleman ? Is it Wrong ? Or is it Kong, by any chance ?

MYSELF: "If married life were an obstacle to spirituality, then they might as well have not married."

SRI AUROBINDO: No doubt. But then when they marry, there is not an omniscient ass like this biographer to tell them that they were going to be ধর্মভুরু² or ধর্মপাগল or in any way concerned with any other ধর্ম than the biographer's.

Well, if the biographer of Confucius can be such an unmitigated ass, Confucius may be allowed to be unwise once or twice, I suppose.

MYSELF: I touch upon a delicate subject, but it is a puzzle.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why delicate ? and why a puzzle ? Do you think that Buddha or Confucius or myself were born with a prevision that they or I would take to the spiritual life ? So long as one is in the ordinary consciousness, one lives the ordinary life. When the awakening and the new consciousness come, one leaves it — nothing puzzling in that.

28. 4. 36

MYSELF: It seems the Mother 'rolled her eyes' at V's sea bath. But you wrote back to him, "It is too small an incident."

¹ Dharma-mad.

² Dharma-guru.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a polite way of putting it. I intimated to him that he was a silly ass to think Mother would get excited about his sea bath. But this silly assness is incorrigible in V. He is doing it all the time and weeping and raging over his imaginations.

29. 4. 36

MYSELF: The pain of the patient gone and she had a beautiful long sleep. What do you think of it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Refuse to think — lost the habit.

MYSELF: Do you know what my weight is? Only 51 Kg. — 112 lbs, 8 st. I was staggered to find it so low, wondered how I was walking about!

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite a respectable weight, I used in the nineteenth century to walk about with less than 100 — found no difficulty.

Here is a letter from M in answer to my question enumerating the troubles of his leg. What do you say to it as a doctor and especially to the behaviour of the two bones? Kindly return the document along with your remarks.

1. 5. 36

MYSELF: I thought as much, Sir! That you would quote your own instance as regards the weight! Exercise, swimming in the sea — nothing is helping me to grow fat.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, man! I always thought exercise decreased the fat and gave strength and muscle. And you want to increase your fat by exercise?

MYSELF: I have no peace now; the whole day passes in lamentation. No use dilating on it, as it has been before and will be after!

SRI AUROBINDO:

We weep before and after,

Our sweetest hours are those we fill with
saddest thought.

MYSELF: Will you send me some force to pull me out,
Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: All right, sir. If you feel ready for
force, I will send you. As for the results, well, let us
see.

MYSELF: Now an absolute blank, a perpetual vegeta-
tive unrest, a Nirvana !

SRI AUROBINDO: Gracious heavens, you have reached
Nirvana so easily ! But how can unrest be Nirvana ? Some
misconception. Perhaps it is Prakritilaya¹ you are aiming
at ! Perhaps you are moving towards a repetition of jada
Bharat² and when you are sufficiently jada and able to
enjoy it, the Nirvana and all the Knowledge will come
to you.

2. 5. 36

MYSELF: You deal too much with paradoxes and con-
tradictory statements, for my little brain to understand.
Compare these two statements: "There is the soul within
and Grace above", and "If you want things to happen
there is no reason why they should happen at all." Are
these not contradictions ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see how it is contrary. Natu-
rally the soul and the Grace are the two ends, but that
does not mean that there is to be nothing between. You
seem to have interpreted the sentence, "There is a dawd-
ling soul within and a sleeping Grace above. When the
Grace awakes, the soul will no more dawdle, because it
will be abducted." Of course, it can happen like that,
but as I put it, there is no reason why it should. Gene-
rally the soul wakes up, rubs its eyes and says, "Hallo,
where is that Grace ?" and begins fumbling around for

¹ Dissolved in unconscious Nature.

² Bharata the inert.

it and pulling at things in the hope that Grace is at the other end of the said things. Finally it pulls at something by accident and the Grace comes toppling down full tilt from God knows where. That's the usual style — but there are others.

MYSELF: I know exercise reduces the fat, but combined with butter and cream, it increases I think. And that is what I am doing now, at Dilipda's. Any objection to gratis supply of butter and cream ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose not, so long as you do not constitute a Municipal Corporation.

Complaint against the Ashram doctor from the D.R. servers. "Often after we have served his dish, he would send a note saying, 'My meals, please !' or a verbal message through any sadhak he might come across ———¹ have to inform Dayabhai that the tiffin box in question has to be brought back." etc., etc.

It is suggested that the said Doctor can have his food all the three times in the day in a tiffin box if he so desires.

Doctor ! doctor !

If you are so irregular and offhand how can you expect patients in the hospital to submit to have their bad eyes cut out instead of their good kidneys ?

3. 5. 36

MYSELF: Very strange, Sir, to connect my irregularity with the irregular behaviour of the patients in hospital. I don't see the logic at all unless you are trying to harass me as advocates do in courts ! What bad luck !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a matter of the forces of Karma. If you are loose and irregular, the things and patients will be the same with you. Don't you know that all "bad luck", as you call it, is due to Karma ?

MYSELF: Last night I tried to compose a poem. It

¹ Word indecipherable.

was a failure, I fell asleep over its first two lines.

SRI AUROBINDO: You call it a failure when you have discovered a new soporific ?

MYSELF: Couldn't touch K without making her burst into tears. These ladies are thinking what heartless brutes, animals, these doctors are !

SRI AUROBINDO: Much safer than if they think "What dears these doctors are, darlings, angels !"

4. 5. 36

MYSELF: Why are we made of so many contradictory elements ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It takes many ingredients to make a nice pudding.

MYSELF: Is it that the path to the Divine can't be made easy lest all leave the ordinary world ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps it is to prevent the world from coming to a sudden end by a universal rush into beatitude.

11. 5. 36

MYSELF: We are dealing with a very delicate personal matter — gun-powder, so it is better to consult you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, Abyssinia is blown up. Why not an Ashram ?

MYSELF: What about Nishikanta's vision poem ? Lost in the subconscious ? And his book of poems ?

SRI AUROBINDO: To be fished out.

MYSELF: I think we can sue you in the Supramental court of justice for this flagrant neglect !

SRI AUROBINDO: No jurisdiction.

MYSELF: When will you send the poem with the explanation ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Shall send back the poem. Vision doubtful (I mean the explanation of it accompanying the poem).

Fact is, I am trying to get some damned thing done — have a chance of success if I keep at it — so can't afford to turn aside to anything else. Just check off in a hurry the daily things, but as for arrears !

MYSELF: "What do you say ?" What else can I say but thoroughly agree with you, second you and third you ? Will Dr. R take the whole responsibility or divide it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very good. Send him to R....

No division is possible with R. His treatment is an indivisible Brahman, however many the aspects. In his latest cases there was a mass of simultaneous illnesses in each body but he took them all in his sweep.

17. 5. 36

MYSELF: I send you a letter of our dear C. If you are still interested in the chap, you can take the trouble to decipher it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have had several letters from him.

MYSELF: He wants to know many things: 1) Descent of the Supra. M. Tail — on the slightest news of which he will give a gorilla jump to Pondy to set his nerves right ! Is the Tail in view ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. Coming down as fast as you fellows will allow.

MYSELF: 2) He wants your remarks on him which will prove '*precious*' !

SRI AUROBINDO: Tell him I have grown chary of remarks. Remarks frighten the Sm. T.

MYSELF: Can any letters and poems be sent, though I know he will hardly read them ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What letters ? The poems are your own and co's, so you are the best judge of that.

MYSELF: The fellow is still dreaming of the Sup. M. Tail ! He doesn't realise yet that many of us will see it after our souls have departed into the subtle planes and will have taken birth again in proper circumstances and

conditions — one after the other dropping, dropping after many years of stay — viz. Mohanlal ! next X-lal, Y-lal, then Nirodlal !

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me. Mohanlal and Company are not running away from the Sm. Tail — they are only running after the paternal tail — as soon as they have stroked it sufficiently, they will return. All the Lals have gone like Japhet in search of their fathers and will return in June, except M who comes back, I believe, after 15 days. Two others asked for filial leave — one is perhaps still thinking of running after P.T. But we are beginning to kick. One “leave” has been refused !

Mahendranath telegraphed about his mother — appendix affected fall. Could not understand, asked for exact nature of illness, got this telegram in reply. Kindly perorate.

19. 5. 36

MYSELF: I don't really understand these paternal and filial loves. A fellow who has been here for seven or eight years and doing Yoga, runs after such a thing as a paternal tail !

SRI AUROBINDO: He says he has been attached to the paternal tail ever since he came here and he felt quite outraged when Mother hinted rather sharply that it was absurd to run after it.

MYSELF: Ridiculous ! Absolutely unthinkable ! Who are these paters and maters and what's their place in your yoga of surrender ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite agree with you. Hear ! hear !

MYSELF: A pressure which one is unable to bear compels him to escape it by running away to stroke somebody's tail. Isn't that so ?

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is so, why should they want to come back to the pressure ? They are very careful about that. “Must have an assurance that all my work will be

given back to me when I return." — (M) Want support while I am here. Will be back in June (i.e. don't let any idea get into you that you have seen the last of me). K — So on and so on.

In my idea it is simply the subconscious and sheepishness. Sheep always do what one sheep has started. K started father business (it was not merely marriage) immediately 5 others sent in filial applications one after another. Subconscious in the sense that primal instincts and irrational difficulties or habitual ones are surging up, surging up, surging up.

MYSELF: It is, as I say, an escape from the atmosphere of pressure ! Are you beginning to kick ? But how long will you go on doing so, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No need to go on — The sheep movement is stopped so far as fathers are concerned. Two half kicks and one whole one were sufficient.

MYSELF: Seeing all these failures in this Yoga, I sometimes wonder if any one here is attaining anything at all; has anybody realised the Divine ? Please don't ask me what I mean by the Divine; it is difficult to explain these things !

SRI AUROBINDO: Why shouldn't I ask ? If you mean the Vedantic realisation, several have had it. Bhakti realisation also. If I were to publish the letters on sadhana experiences that come to me, people would marvel and think that the Ashram was packed full of great Yogis ! Those who know something about Yoga would not mind about the dark periods, eclipses, hostile attacks, despairings, falls, for they know that these things happen to Yogis. Even the failures would have become Gurus, if I had allowed it, with circles of Shishyas ! X did become one. Y of course. But all that does not count here, because what is a full realisation outside, is here only a beginning of Siddhi. Here the test is transformation of the nature, psychic, spiritual, finally supramental. That and nothing else is what makes it so difficult.

MYSELF: X says he has been eight years here; yet no peace, at times only joy and that also joy of literary creation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Eight years ? Amateur Yogis ! Those who know something about Yoga would count 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 years as nothing for the preliminary work of preparation and self-purification. That was X's bane. He expected to conquer heaven in a gallop, but there was only one way of doing it, complete abdication of self, and that he refused and probably could not do. Then when the gallop could not succeed, he has been wrestling and groaning ever since — meditation, japa, prayer with only one idea "when is it coming ? when is it coming ? why is it not coming ? why is it not coming ? of course it won't come. It will never come, never, never." And of course it doesn't. That is not the way....

MYSELF: But poetry he says is work, not in yoga. If that could give the Divine any number of literary people would have it.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is like him and most of the sadhaks. All hold grip to their own ideas, follow their own conceptions about Yoga. Reason ! logic ! As for the ways pointed out by the Guru, all supramental nonsense. The surprising thing is that anyone succeeds here.

MYSELF: You spoke of the supramental coming as fast as we will allow. If we fellows have to allow, you had better close down the shop and enjoy your supramental beatitude.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have mistaken the sense altogether. It simply means if with the bother of your revolts, depressions, illnesses, shouts, quarrels and all the rest of it, I can get time to go on rapidly. Nothing more, sir.

I am quite ready. I propose that you call a meeting and put it to the vote "That hereby we resolve to release Sri Aurobindo into beatitude and all go off quietly to Abyssinia."

MYSELF: I tried hard to write a poem, but failed in spite of prayer and call. Then I wrote to you to send me some Force. Before the letter had reached you, lo, the miracle was done! Can you explain the process? Simply the writing has helped to establish the contact with the Force?

SRI AUROBINDO: I usually read your soul-stirring communications (medical or other) at 7.30 or 8 or thereabouts. This one I must have got only after 10 p.m. But that makes no difference.

MYSELF: Is it because the Force "that is always there operating", is not enough for me that you had to regain your curvilinear proportions and send a dose? Or because you fell flat? My poem also did the same!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is enough if you hitch on to the operating Force which is always rotating or hanging about over your head or over my head or over the general head of the Ashram or the (terrestrial) universe. It does not much matter where you hitch on, so long as you somehow do it; but in this case there may have been some connection with my curvilinear recovery which took place somewhere about 9.30. But if so, it can only have been because the Force rotated more forcibly by the impulsion of my recovery, for the conscious sending of Force to you took place only when I was reading the letter.

MYSELF: I would like to know the Force's general operation in illness, yogic purposes, etc. It really is very interesting, and nothing written anywhere on it. Can you illumine?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have made as usual a few scattered observations but of course they don't go very far or shed much light. "One day" perhaps I shall write volumes on the matter which I suppose you won't read.

MYSELF: Please don't fall flat again, Sir. So much de-

pend on your curvilinear position, especially when you are bringing down the Supramental Tail !

SRI AUROBINDO: Now look here, do you think I fell flat on purpose ? No, sir. Sudden rush of correspondence, interruption of campaign — consequent breakdown of road to Addis Ababa, retreat necessary, consolidation of back positions, road repair — flat, but I suppose necessary.

MYSELF: I thought R was cured, for she hasn't come back for her leg treatment. Shall I call her back and treat her ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know. She says you have tried your level best and failed. Perhaps if her leg hurts her enough, she will come back or if she complains too much I shall suggest to her the way back.

23. 5. 36

MYSELF: Getting depressed, discouraged — thinking of giving up the blessed business of writing poetry ! Binapani has no compassion towards me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense ! She has plenty — at times.

MYSELF: Will try again, if no result, will absolutely fall flat. Can't blame me, I think you have no time to send any Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: Had no force to send at least some that I considered worth something. Fell flat myself for the last two or three days — as flat as I could manage to at this stage. Am recovering curvilinear proportions and shall try to send something along.

MYSELF: No medical cases today.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hello ! Golden Age come or what ? No — for R's pain is kicking cheerfully again. It is telling her, "Your Nirod's potions and things indeed ! I go when I like, come when I like. Doctors — pooh !"

Your book crowded out by a long night's correspondence. Send again tonight. Also am unable to return to

Dilip Nishikanta's long poem for the same reason.

27. 5. 36

MYSELF: I am merely repeating the words: Impurity, desire and despair, in my Bengali poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, everybody repeats himself. A time will come when the trinity will disappear, let us hope.

MYSELF: Did you seriously write that I have been a talented something? I find no talent anywhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, you thought outside you would have made the same progress. I simply expressed my doubts whether your utmost efforts would have carried you beyond literary talent.

MYSELF: You have so abruptly stopped writing about the Yogic Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: I didn't stop because I didn't begin. I wrote some scattered answers only and intimated to you that volumes might come out in future (not in these notes) which you would probably not read.

2. 6. 36

MYSELF: I am feeling dry, dry, dry. But a mood of meditation creeps over the dryness — sometimes a feeling of stillness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that's all right isn't it?

MYSELF: I find that my point of concentration usually goes between the eyebrows.

SRI AUROBINDO: A quite useful place for concentration — O.K. so far.

MYSELF: Nothing happens, though at times a feeling of stillness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Better and better!

MYSELF: Can you tell me why no experience is coming to me and why those that I had long long ago, have stopped?

SRI AUROBINDO: Too big a riot of mental activity and vital jumping.

MYSELF: If no joy is felt out of a creation after so much labour, what's the use, can you say?

SRI AUROBINDO: The use of having no joy? It is no use.

MYSELF: I am thinking after all what am I to do then? But thinking has no end either.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. Stop thinking and become ভক¹।

MYSELF: *Que faire?* I suppose this dryness is due to your unexpected progress. That is the only consolation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Dryness, no! that is part of your own pilgrimage. The rest may be due to Ad. Ab. Quite a number of people are trying to become ভক — wide etc. without ever having intended it. I like to think my march may have something to do with it.

MYSELF: Addis Ababa how far?

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't say. My rapidity slowed down much after D turned turtle and the correspondence avalanche restarted. However, "nous progressâmes."

MYSELF: Will you cast a glance at J's story 'Russian Cat' which even T liked?

SRI AUROBINDO: I shall try my Herculean best — I can't promise more.

3. 6. 36

MYSELF: You mean to say: "I am in Heaven. Everything is all right in the best of all possible worlds — Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Nirod"!

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. All is well, if it ends well.

MYSELF: But how to make you realise that I welcome the stillness etc. but it's not always there.

SRI AUROBINDO: I quite realise. Don't make such Herculean efforts to explain it.

¹ Still.

MYSELF: No joy, no energy. Don't like to read or write — as if a dead man were walking about. Do you understand the position? Any personal experience?

SRI AUROBINDO: I quite understand; often had it myself devastatingly. That's why I always advise people who have it to cheer up and buck up.

MYSELF: I asked Kanai; he says some sort of trouble in the *prāṇa*¹ positively desire or ego; just as a kavi-raj puts his finger on the pulse and diagnoses at once so with this. What's required is purification.

SRI AUROBINDO: Diagnosis right — only should add an adjective disappointed *prāṇa* and ego. No active vital row; vital and ego lying back flat and gloomy.

MYSELF: So, since I have to pass the time, how to do it? To bear the Cross gloomily hoping for a resurrection?

SRI AUROBINDO: To cheer up, buck up and the rest if you can, saying "Rome was not built in a day" — if you can't, gloom it through till the sun rises and the little birds chirp and all is well.

Looks however as if you were going through a training in *vairagya*.² Don't much care for *vairagya* myself, always avoided the beastly thing, but had to go through it partly, till I hit on *samatā* as a better trick. But *samatā* is difficult, *vairagya* is easy, only damnably gloomy and uncomfortable.

4. 6. 36

MYSELF: *Vairagya*! Good Lord! What next? A fellow who has always detested it, loved life and company, now undergoing a training in *vairagya*!! Such is life, eh? Never dreamt of Yoga, and stumbled into it — *vairagya* now crowns it! Why D's phantom on me? His drive towards *vairagya*, I understand, was due to his past life's karma.

¹ Vital.

² Positive detachment from things of this life.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know about your past life's karma? But perhaps it is D's karma which is afflicting you, — your karma being that of getting caught up in the sound of his tempestuous course.

MYSELF: And when I look at his suffering due to this blessed vairagya, I shudder. I am only a small pot — then why this heavy burden on me?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, why did you get into the trend of the big pot?

7. 6. 36

MYSELF: A poem for you. I hope you will make out in it the fall of Adam (soul) from the garden of Eden. But what is it — symbolic, mystic or cystic?

SRI AUROBINDO: Symbolic mystic without being cryptic-cystic. Anyhow, pure inspiration and very luminous. Something undeniably original this time, what?

MYSELF: One good news: I find now three mules — mules, mind you, not horses — are trying to draw me on: 1) Meditation, 2) silence (not of the mind but of the buccal cavity), 3) poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, mules are very useful animals. When Badoglio's motor lorries broke down, he bought 20,000 mules (I won't swear to the exact number) and they did the trick. You have only three mules and not 20,000 — but perhaps 3 will serve.

MYSELF: The buccal silence I can keep off from clashing with the other two. But the collision between meditation and poetry is inevitable unless I favour one of them.

SRI AUROBINDO: There are three ways of meeting that situation (1) Say "Yes, yes" to both partners, but that may create trouble afterwards, (2) Be cryptic-cystic in your answers, so that neither will be sure what you mean, (3) Silence with an occasional profound "Ah, hum. Yes, eh!" "Ah hum" always sounds unfathomable depths —

and if "Yes" is too positive "eh" tones it down and corrects it. You have not enough worldly wisdom.

MYSELF: I shall try with all my nerves to concentrate as far as practicable — and find also some not quite definitely pleasing sensation out of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that is good — I hope the indefinite will soon define itself.

MYSELF: As poetry also has come, I wouldn't like to give it up either. But how to harmonise ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No need to harmonise by any set arrangement — only keep up the concentration. One hour of packed concentration or even a few minutes can do as much as three hours less packed. Do you say yours is not packed ? Well, striped, streaked, spotted, dotted or whatever it may be.

MYSELF: And do you 'like to think' that it is all due to your march forward ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course I like and it may even be true.

MYSELF: Please ask blessed Time to stand still behind you till your pen has run a 50 miles gallop on this sheet.

SRI AUROBINDO: Time can't stand still, but I have tried to make the fellow trot slower instead of cantering — with no great result.

14. 6. 36

MYSELF: I am facing so many difficulties which make me doubt about my success in Yoga. So wouldn't it be better for you to let me go instead of you wasting so much time and labour on me ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your analysis and reasonings are those of Grand'mère Depression which sees only what she allows to come to the surface for her purposes. There are other things that Madame suppresses because they don't suit her. It does not greatly matter what brought you here — the important thing is to go on till the psychic

truth behind all that becomes manifest. The inertia of your physical nature is only a thick crust on the surface which gives way slowly, but under the pressure it will give way. If you had some big object in the ordinary life and nothing to hope for here it might be different, but as things are it would be foolish to walk off under the instigation of this old Mother Gloom-Gloom. Stick on and you will get the soul's reward hereafter.

16. 6. 36

MYSELF: Now I find that I am only a bundle of vital feeling and nothing else ! This is yogic transformation !

SRI AUROBINDO: Nobody can be only a bundle of sex. Even a cat or a Casanova can't be that. It is the aboriginal coming up and figuring as the whole man. But there are other bundles there even if this one is at the top for the moment.

28. 6. 36

MYSELF: N has pain near the spine, at the top of the right sacroiliac joint, for the last 2 weeks.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has sent me a wail too about jerks and sleeplessness.

MYSELF: Please don't forget my book; if no time let it incubate provided it hatches out fully.

SRI AUROBINDO: Had to. D took all my time with his woes and the opinions of Lawrence. It is the "Bases of Yoga" that has upset him !!! Moreover Jatin's two letters, three urgently needed replies to sadhaks who have been waiting hungrily for weeks or days etc., etc. So —

5. 7. 36

MYSELF: Please try to give one or two more 'pressures' for poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Shall try.

One answer to Jatin managed. Rest swimming on the wide wide sea.

15. 7. 36

MYSELF: J writes: 'Deepest love to Sri Aurobindo. Do convey it if Papa writes blessings, if J comes up in memory.'

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't understand. What is to be conveyed? And how do the two 'ifs' relate together or with the "convey"?

MYSELF: Please try if you can, to circulate some Force at night — 9 p.m. and afternoon, just when you regain your curvilinear proportions — 2.30 p.m.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no such regularity about curvilineation. However I will circulate whenever possible.

20. 7. 36

MYSELF: S is hardly better today.

SRI AUROBINDO: The fellow is thinking only of eating and renewing his ordinary life; he can't be allowed to chronicise his beastly jaundice.

28. 7. 36

MYSELF: You say you don't know enough Bengali nor the metre, but all these discussions have revealed that your "don't know" is much more than "we know". Whether you know or don't, please just opine on what you think.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very well, I will go on hazarding my perceptions of Form in the Formless. Metre and law can always take care of themselves.

MYSELF: My poetic fervour has volatilised away!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it was a good spirit any way.

2. 8. 36

MYSELF: I am again prosaic and gloomy. Everybody is changing here.

SRI AUROBINDO: Everybody is who ? Give me the good news.

MYSELF: Must I go on crying and crying ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I hope not. Crying won't hasten the change.

MYSELF: If the medical channel had opened in you like the painting vision what a great help it would be for all of us.

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, in that case I should have to do all the doctoring. So I take care not to let the Medico open. Simple measure of prudence.

4. 8. 36

MYSELF: What I asked you was that by the very fact of the obstacle the Force or the giver of the Force knows that some mistake is being made. Suppose you give a certain Force but it fails to produce the desired result, then you say, "Oh that fellow has given wrong medicines — swine !"

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. The Force (I am out of the picture here) feels a greater obstacle but need not know that it is due to a wrong medicine. Force and knowledge are two different things and in the consciousness below supermind may go together or may not.

Swine is not appropriate — it should be some other animal.

7. 8. 36

MYSELF: Today at Pranam I felt a sort of a 'blocky' feeling, if you know what I mean.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, thought at first, I was afraid, you meant you felt blockhead or felt foolish ! but remembered a line — the “block” of descent.

8. 8. 36

MYSELF: If you have thought that it is the apparent period of sterility that has produced this “maturity”, I am afraid it is not quite so; for this poem was started and one and a half stanzas were completed on the 25th.

SRI AUROBINDO: I still think so and think it is quite so.

MYSELF: All this maturity etc. is all right, only it doesn't thrill me for I have no joy, no interest in life. Please don't taunt me saying that it is all D ! It is not !

SRI AUROBINDO: No. D this time is making a valiant attempt to suppress the Man of Sorrows in him and seems so far to have succeeded. I hope you too will soon screw up your energy to the pitch of throwing off this encumbrance.

MYSELF: I don't know whether the Goddess of poetry will withdraw her boon because I don't care much for it.

SRI AUROBINDO: She doesn't seem to be doing so.

MYSELF: I hope you understand my psychology and, if you do, give some answers, not mystic but mental.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is quite easy to understand if one realises that the natural being is not of one piece but made up of parts or quantum or whatever one likes to call it.... Then there is the Man of Sorrows himself — in everything.... As yet no resolution of the central being to put all that into harmony, expel what is to be expelled, change what is to change. I do not know whether you call that mystic or mental answers, but I can't give you any other that would be true.

MYSELF: You used an expression — *kindly prescribe medically*, which was not clear to me, for I thought we

have done so. Don't you think that expression is a little more figurative, at least for my brains ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all, if you had only used your brains or your intuition or any blessed thing available and not been satisfied with a meaningless and hieratic 'usuals' instead of my matter-of-fact 'urinals'.

13. 8. 36

MYSELF: C has sent some money to buy some garlands for you. You can bless him without garlands, can't you ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, of course — quite able.

17. 8. 36

MYSELF: S complains of vague pains again. Dr. M says he must do only light work.

SRI AUROBINDO: We gave him no work. It is his own spree.

MYSELF: Tomorrow, by the way, I am going to burst a little — *attention* !

SRI AUROBINDO: Eh what ! Burst ? which way ? If you explode, fizz only — don't blow up the Ashram.

18. 8. 36

MYSELF: I am sending my explosion — result of Darshan !

SRI AUROBINDO. Man above (or of Sorrows or whatever may be the fact), how is it you fell on such a fell day for your burst ? There has been an explosion, as D merrily calls it, beginning on the 14th but reaching now its epistolary climax and I have been writing sober letters to excited people for the last few hours. Solicit therefore your indulgence for a guru besieged by other people's disturbances (and letters) until tonight. Send back the

blessed burst and I will try to deal with it.

MYSELF: Is it too early to expect a change, but without that I can't walk, not to speak of running. I am losing all hope.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the contribution of the Man of Sorrows.

MYSELF: Is the poem done ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Very good, especially first half. But this flower and bee image has been buzzing about since ages before Kalidasa; needs a little more polish to look entirely new.

19. 8. 36

MYSELF: I am again passing through a period of **মন খারাপ** (depression) due to the same old trouble.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ah that **মন খারাপ** ! If you could only get rid of it — face the thing calmly and steadily as something to be eliminated which necessarily takes time and must and will be done !

I fear my answers are scrappy as well as illegible, but this has been also a fell day (one letter 36 pages vernacular, 2 others each 8 pages of foolscap, others less in size (4, 2, 1 etc.) but ample in number — and this is no-correspondence period !) I have had to race against the old man Time.

21. 8. 36

MYSELF: Tell me, if I pray for peace, strength, etc., will it be enough or not ? After that, rejection, detachment must be done by your Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: At any rate there must be the acceptance of the rejection or detachment for the Force to use — a kind of will to it. If you simply pray and then say "All right, now, damn it, I have done all that is necessary. I can now lament or indulge" — that makes

things a trifle difficult.

MYSELF: What about J and his wife?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both of them very well and going well since they were here.

MYSELF: What about D? Is he all right?

SRI AUROBINDO: By the way, as you got better, D flopped down. Lost his incipient *nirbhar*¹ and wants to walk off again.

MYSELF: Any time to circulate some Force for poetry?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N. B. I send you the lucubrations of the S fellow for your information. I absolutely object to his living in and on the Mother's force — he would be there like his own ball,² neither melted, nor plastic nor disappeared. Any remarks? Please return the gem as I may have to answer it.

23. 8. 36

MYSELF: I would like to know the mystery behind J's poetic flowering. We don't meet any such original ideas and expressions in Bengali literature.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course not — she was not inspired this time by Bengali literature, but by the Faery International.

MYSELF: When J was asked to compose songs the other day, we found a sudden transformation. How was this brought about? And what did she do?

SRI AUROBINDO: Opened the lyrical gift in her probably — began knocking for the spontaneous song in place of the mind-made article.

But, my dear sir, it often happens like that. I believe you were not here when X's poetry blossomed; but it

¹ Reliance on the Divine.

² S complained of some 'ball-like' swelling, in his letter to Sri Aurobindo.

was quite as sudden. Remember Tagore's description of him as the cripple who suddenly threw away his crutches and began to run and his astonishment at the miracle. Nishikanta came out in much the same way, a sudden Brahmaputra of inspiration. The only peculiarity in J's case is the source she struck — the pure mystic source.

MYSELF: I would like to know how you have done it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if you think I know how it's done ! I hammer about till I hit the right spot. It hits quick sometimes, that's all. Note however that there was always in J something that wanted or claimed to belong to another world. Perhaps by the pressure she got into contact with it.

MYSELF: How do you find the poem I am sending you ? Does it deserve incineration ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, as poetry it is good — but I can't say it is distinguished or beautiful like the poems you have written since. You needn't incinerate, but bury it in a drawer somewhere for the moment. Read it again after ten years (Horace's advice).

MYSELF: What about the refrain ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Refrain ? Man alive, if all were like the refrain, I should say "Bury, bury, burn, burn."

I have persistently forgotten to send you this letter. Can you give me any light on the subject ? Do you know anything about these injections ?

24. 8. 36

MYSELF: My knowledge of leprosy is practically nil, so I approached Dr. M. He says since the servant had come in close contact with the family all the members must take the injections as proposed. Though the treatment is palliative it may produce a greater prophylactic effect, at least the psychological effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord — only that ! Psychologi-

cal effect needs injections ?

MYSELF: Dr. M says that servants working for 30 years in leper hospitals did not develop any leprosy. No intimacy in the contact ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps unconcern also !

MYSELF: Did I shed enough light to illumine the supramental table ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Umph !

25. 8. 36

MYSELF: Jatin had a dream of you as in the photograph, giving him instructions in his engineering work !! It was Sri Aurobindo in his previous form.

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose the present Sri Aurobindo having left all engineering instructions to the Mother, the previous Sri Aurobindo had to come and do it in this case.

MYSELF: You are cryptic, Sir, because you are becoming more and more supramental ! For supramental's sake, don't be that yet. What's this threat, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but haven't I told you that the supramental can't be understood by the intellect ? So necessarily or at least logically if I become supramental and speak supramentally I must be unintelligible to everybody. Q.E.D. It is not a threat, only the statement of a natural evolution.

MYSELF: A carpenter beaten by a rat.

SRI AUROBINDO: Say, say ! I never heard of a rat beating a man before ! He ought to go to the criminal court, instead of the hospital.

26. 8. 36

MYSELF: At last you have given me an occasion for a question: let it be an occasion for a big reply.

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, what is this extravagant

ambition for bigness ?

With fifty letters a day running on me in a "non-correspondence" period, a supramental brevity is all of which I am capable.

MYSELF: My being meets you or the Mother in dream, and receives your blessings. Has it any concrete value ? As concrete as the Pranam touch ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What do you mean by concrete ? It is concrete there just as the Abyssinian or Spanish wars are concrete here.

30. 8. 36

MYSELF: Any reply to the Bengali poem *The Mournful Bird* ? Opinion on his song also, please.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very nice song ! But what an apprehensive bird !

MYSELF: S has some inflammation inside the ear. He needed the Mother's permission for treatment when I wanted to apply medicine.

SRI AUROBINDO: You can. It was Mother who sent him to you for treatment.

31. 8. 36

MYSELF: Yes, S told me that Mother had sent him, but when I went to apply medicine, he said, ask Mother !

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense ! It is implied. Mother doesn't send him to the Dispensary for a promenade or to dance.

1. 9. 36

MYSELF: Is the image of the bird swinging in the *anchal*¹ of the saree very queer ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know. Perhaps it can, if it

¹ The terminal part of the saree.

wants to, but it might feel a little uncomfortable. But these are prosaic facts — not poetry.

MYSELF: I am sending you a few snaps — some samples of your supramental yogis. Isn't D splendid in standing posture ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Superb !

MYSELF: What about his deep intellectual look in the sitting one ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Admirable !

MYSELF: And my noble self seems to be coming out of the grave or going there probably !

SRI AUROBINDO: Asking where will be the end of this अनाद्य नैना ?¹

MYSELF: My supramental forehead is merging with the Infinite !

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, dominating scornfully from there the pigmy universe.

MYSELF: I give you a rare occasion for laughter. Please do laugh loudly and share it with us !

SRI AUROBINDO: No time to laugh ! Can only smile.

5. 9. 36

MYSELF: Again a blessed boil inside the left nostril — painful, feverish. A dose of Force, please !

SRI AUROBINDO: As the modernist poet says —

O blessed blessed boil within the nostril,
How with pure pleasure dost thou make thy
boss thrill !

He sings of thee with sobbing trill and cross trill,
O blessed blessed boil within the nostril.

I hope this *stotra*² will propitiate the boil and make it disappear, satisfied.

Is that why you tend towards home-eating ?

¹ Mortal play.

² Hymn.

6. 9. 36

MYSELF: Because of some inconvenience I wanted meals at home, but if you want, home tendency can be stopped....

SRI AUROBINDO: D.R. says more and more people demanding home consumption — carrying capacity exhausted. Will have to double Dayabhai's work if this goes on; he will spend whole day tiffin-carrying and finally what will be the damned use of the Dining Hall? Your name among the home-consumers — so gave you a jog. If we omit the visitors 50 per cent of the Ashram are taking home meals and most of these all meals at home. All do not take by cart, but even so the cart has to carry more than its proper capacity.

MYSELF: I couldn't make out one word in your yesterday's stotra. Is it 'make thy bows thrill'?

SRI AUROBINDO: I thought you'd boggle over it. "Boss", man, "boss" = yourself as owner, proprietor, patron, capitalist of the boil.

MYSELF: G has some signs of inflammation in the lung. Better to take an X-ray etc....

SRI AUROBINDO: Better not X-ray etc. unless it is absolutely necessary. Feed him, ———¹ him, coddle with cod liver oil and see how it works out before plunging into these soul-shaking necessities.

7. 9. 36

MYSELF: G did not have good sleep at night.

SRI AUROBINDO: Said bad sleep was due to the beastly blanket and mattress. Prefers a bed-sheet to wrap himself according to former custom.

MYSELF: About his work, don't you think with running fever, weakness, etc. it would be a little too much

¹ Word indecipherable.

'to move in the open' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That of course. The objection is to making him a permanently sedentary invalid; that is what so many are becoming.

MYSELF: Why not pump a big dose into A ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very refractory to big doses.

MYSELF: Dr. B prescribes butter for my *amaigrissement* and cod liver oil by myself.

SRI AUROBINDO: ? ?

8. 9. 36

MYSELF: Why two interrogations against my using butter and cod liver oil ? Since the Force doesn't help, I have to seek fatness from these things. Of course, Dr. B added also cheerfulness to the prescription.

SRI AUROBINDO: Butter and cod liver oil — which is two.

Mother pours scorn on your idea that you are a jutting skeleton. She says that you are less shockingly plump than when you came, but that is all. But if you take butter and oil together to say nothing of cheerfulness, what will you become ? Remember Falstaff.

9. 9. 36

MYSELF: About me, did you say less shockingly plump ! Good gracious, was I ever plump ? Mother has only to see my bare body and exclaim — Oh, doctor like that !

SRI AUROBINDO: It's your clothes that make you plump ?

MYSELF: But this S's trouble has become really a nuisance ! Nothing seems to produce any effect on him.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has written me a furious letter denouncing you and all doctors and their wicked futile ways.

MYSELF: He is so much bent on having his diet in-

creased in spite of our giving him quite a sufficient amount. His excessive hunger points towards some worm infection. Shall we try *santonin*?

SRI AUROBINDO: But how try without being sure? *Liver* also gives alternations of not eating and bouts of excessive hunger.

10. 9. 36

MYSELF: What's the matter with my poetry? I tried yesterday's poem for a long time, nothing doing! The channel has choked up or what? Remedy — Try and try or rest and rest?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both methods are possible and each has its advantages — or they might be combined, "Rest and rest and try and try."

MYSELF: I'm feeling unusually happy after months! Man of Sorrows was non-existent — kicked out? But unfortunately he is trying to poke his face again!

SRI AUROBINDO: Twist his nose.

MYSELF: Time to push us up a little, Sir, so that we may give you a proper reception, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: That's what the Force seems to be trying to do.

MYSELF: Don't forget to make us at least feel the Descent. Thirty years of *sadhana*, by Jove! And yet you are only very near?

SRI AUROBINDO: 30 years too little or too many? What would have satisfied your material mind — 3 years? 3 months? 3 weeks? Considering that in ordinary evolution it could not have been done even at Nature's express speed in less than 3000 years, and would ordinarily have taken anything from 30,000 to 300,000, the transit of 30 years is perhaps not too slow.

11. 9. 36

MYSELF: A says he feels heavy and sleepy and not refreshed. Is it the Force that does it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, no! It is forcelessness that does it.

12. 9. 36

MYSELF: I am tempted to ask you about the suicide of S's wife. You said something about Fate which is always a mysterious word.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, the determination of human life and events is a mysterious thing. Can't help that, you know. Fate is composed of many things — Cosmic Will + individual self-determination + play of forces + Karma + x + y + z + a + b + c ad infinitum.

MYSELF: Some say that the Divine's Way would have been to try to turn the wife also this way or to help S to go through the ordeal — not this drastic step! A word or two please!

SRI AUROBINDO: God only knows what God does and why he is doing it. And God is not in the habit of letting other people know — except when it suits him.

MYSELF: A has malaise, not refreshed.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have been without light, so black, black, black. Keeping everything in hope of better luck today. (This has nothing to do with A's malaise, by the way. Trying to take advantage of bottom of page.)

13. 9. 36

MYSELF: Try some Force please, A is getting disgusted, it seems!

SRI AUROBINDO: Only getting? He is chronically disgusted, to my experience.

MYSELF: The hostile forces have made my life unbearable, sucking away every drop of blood. Can't sit outside even one minute under the breezy starry sky. Their breeding place is in the thick bushes M has planted. Can't you direct him to strike them off and save my precious life? What will happen if the Ashram doctor is to die of malaria?

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, M will have a fit and you will have to treat him and probably he will kill you into the bargain. You prefer a violent death to malaria? Where there is life, there is hope, even if there are also mosquitos. Why not negotiate with M himself? If you plead with him in a sweet, low, pathetic voice, he may have mercy.

By the way, S has consented to take the cod liver oil after all, — so I have agreed to ask you for a whole bottle for her personal absorption. So send her a bottle of this divine but fishy nectar.

16. 9. 36

MYSELF: Gangadhar says he feels "tous les bien"!

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! what's that? French?

MYSELF: At times I think I am really useless as a doctor, I haven't the gift for it — wrong choice of profession, altogether like your Yoga, Sir! Both of them forced down my throat! I often feel like asking the Mother to take off this responsibility from me and give it to some fitter person.

SRI AUROBINDO: To whom?

MYSELF: I have done some studies surely, but even quacks seem to be more successful.

SRI AUROBINDO: Book knowledge is necessary, but not much use by itself.

MYSELF: What are the elements then wanting in me?

SRI AUROBINDO: Lack of experience, lack of decision, vacillating intuition, want of vision.

MYSELF: It is true that I haven't much faith in our drugs, but with these very drugs doctors become successful.

SRI AUROBINDO: They go ahead, don't mind how many people they kill, but they go — human Motorcars.

MYSELF: It seems I don't know yet the right way to call down the Force or is it because the 'canalisation' hasn't been done yet?

SRI AUROBINDO: Right — that's it.

MYSELF: I am getting more and more disappointed, still more in Yoga since I hear that you are now trying more for transformation of nature than for experience.

SRI AUROBINDO: Because without transformation of nature, the blessed experience is something like gold crown on a pig's head — won't do. Picturesque perhaps, but —

MYSELF: Please give me precise *practical* suggestions on the art of healing.

SRI AUROBINDO: My God, man! I am not a doctor.

MYSELF: What to do? How to bring down the Force?

SRI AUROBINDO: How? is there a how? You call, you open, it comes (after a time). Or, you don't call, you open, it comes. Or, you call, you don't open, it doesn't come. Three possibilities. But how —? Well, God he knows or perhaps he doesn't!

MYSELF: One must have the gift, I said. Have I?

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't say! Had you the poetic gift some years ago?

17. 9. 36

MYSELF: As I thought — no help but to wait for canalisation and in the meantime carry on. I suppose all 'lacks' will be removed by the descent of Force?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously, obviously!

MYSELF: You promised to write about Intuition, but like all your promises...!

SRI AUROBINDO: I promised to do so in some future

age when I had time. That promise stands — if a promise stands. What more can you ask of it ?

MYSELF: Regarding A, you said he was refractory to big doses. In that case how will my calling help the canalisation of the hard granite ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Even to small doses. Sometimes I get a little surreptitiously and, as it were, against his will. He is much more granite than you.

MYSELF: You can be less mysterious in these explanations, *si vous voulez*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not mysterious at all. Succinct and epigrammatic.

18. 9. 36

MYSELF: 'Obviously, obviously' ! What obviously, Sir ? When will the blessed Force descend ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is irrelevant. The time of its descent has nothing to do with its obviousness.

MYSELF: Have been trying these 2 or 3 days on this small poem, can't do it. Remarkable maturity of expression etc., etc. all have melted away !

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. They are there, only feeling shy and sitting modestly behind the purdah.

MYSELF: While X and others receive your Force for poetry, why am I such a granite block ? Y also receives very well.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ah, you think so ! My dear sir, I have to do boring operations like digging an artesian well before I can get a few poems out of him. And afterwards it is one long wail "All gone, all gone ! I am damned, doomed, dead, deteriorated, degenerated" for a whole day period. Sir, Y is twice the Man of Sorrows you are.

MYSELF: If everything goes on so tremendously slow, isn't it enough to make one despair and sit and lament ? Because one doesn't know how the devil one should proceed !

SRI AUROBINDO: If you appeal to the devil, you can't proceed.

MYSELF: Well, after the failure in poetry, I am thinking now of reading, and writing any blessed thing that comes to the pen. But there's no joy in it. Meditation is hard, doesn't bring any result — this is the state of affairs.

SRI AUROBINDO: Present Discontents, what !

MYSELF: Fed up, damnably fed up ! Work of the Spirit as complex as human nature.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course it must be, because it is in human nature that it works.

MYSELF: You call, you open, you don't call, you open, you call, you don't open — no profounder mystery can there be than these your phrases !

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all, plain as your nose. Excuses to the nose ! I gave you three different cases, — don't mix them up together.

MYSELF: I have called for poetry, I have actually sat up for 2 hours, has it come ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You called but did not open, so it did not come.

MYSELF: I am praying for A's cure, is there a response !

SRI AUROBINDO: You called, but A did not open, so it did not cure.

Both instances establish my case. Q.E.D.

MYSELF: You said once that it is the spiritual consciousness I need, then how the dickens shall I get it by reading say, Dickens, Lawrence or Nehru ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably not ! Especially Dickens.

MYSELF: Really your Yoga is a puzzle and I haven't been able to catch the head or tail of it, shall never perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: You need not catch either its head or its tail. It will be sufficient if you allow it to catch your head or your tail or both ! Cheerio ! Tails forward !

MYSELF: G is now well. Shall we begin cod liver oil now or finish the injections ? Ah, if all patients were like him !

SRI AUROBINDO: Better finish injections first, then oil him.

19. 9. 36

MYSELF: There you are, Sir, with your paradoxical, mysterious brevities ! Dickens won't give spiritual consciousness and it is a waste of time; again, they can be done with *nirbhar* ! Then why should I do anything wasteful with *nirbhar* ?

SRI AUROBINDO: If you want to understand my supramental "brevities", you must read carefully. You have absolutely ignored my pregnant "Possibly". I never said that it must be a *waste* of time — but "possibly" yes or "possibly" not. Reading Dickens merely cannot give you the spiritual consciousness — that is obvious. It would be a miracle if it did. Reading the Oxford Dictionary might be more helpful in that direction. Unless of course a miracle took place; then even Dickens. But otherwise it may evidently be a waste of time. X got helped by Lawrence's letters — even J gave him dream-meetings with J and his daughter. But most people would get little that is either occult or spiritual from either. But things done with *nirbhar* can help — not because of themselves, but because of the *nirbhar*.

MYSELF: To try to be a literary man and yet not to know what big literary people have contributed would be inexcusable.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why is it inexcusable ? I don't know what the Japanese or the Soviet Russian writers have contributed, but I feel quite happy and moral in my ignorance. As for reading Dickens in order to be a literary man that's a strange idea. He was the most unliterary bloke that ever succeeded in literature and his style is

a howling desert.

MYSELF: Can you tell me something satisfactory, encouraging, hopeful and practical at the same time — can't plead now that you aren't a doctor ? !

SRI AUROBINDO: Give up the mentalising, hesitating, fluctuating habit. That is the one practical thing to do.

MYSELF: You said — I called, I didn't open. Isn't it mysterious when I called and sat up with paper and pencil for 2 hours ? Then all I can say is that opening is a mysterious business !

SRI AUROBINDO: Who says it is not ?

Some people have the trick of always opening to a Force (e.g. D, N, for creative literary activity). Some have it sometimes, don't have it sometimes (you, A, myself). Why make it a case of kicks and despair ?

21. 9. 36

MYSELF: I had been to the pier with Y. We were quietly resting on a bench with our feet up, when a Tamilian came with a stick in hand and ordered us to put our feet down. I was rather bewildered and put my feet down; so did Y. I said, maybe he is the guard of the pier. Behind us Purani and others were sitting with their feet up, but he didn't tell them anything. This made Y very excited and said that he had insulted us. He was only a drunkard or a rogue. Then she accused me of cowardice for my abject submission. The first thing a woman respects and admires in a man is courage ! etc., etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously what you ought to have done was to go baldheaded for the Tamilian, bang up his eyes, smash his nose, extract some of his teeth, break his jaw and fling him into the sea. Afterwards if the police came to arrest you, disable half the force and slaughter the Inspector. Then Y would have come to you in jail and wept admiringly over the mighty hero. That's

what a "woman" expects of a "man" since the cave days. It is also what a she-cat expects of a tom-cat.

MYSELF: I have one more blessed boil ! Dr. Becharlal says it is a good sign for it means purification !! If so I shall bear thousands !!!

SRI AUROBINDO: All that's a discovery. The boil is then truly a blessed one !

22. 9. 36

MYSELF: One should be acquainted with the best literature of the world.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not indispensable — even by being steeped in one literature, one can arrive. But useful of course.

MYSELF: What about planning to read Meredith, Hardy, Shelley, Keats and the Continental and Russian writers ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord, sir, I wish I had time to follow out a programme as massive as yours. I have none even to dilate upon yours.

MYSELF: Who is this of France you spoke of, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Henri Quatre, Henri IV of France — one of the most famous names in French history — what the deuce, sir ! never heard of him ? Anyhow, he was a typical example of a great hero, victor in many battles who was yet physically a coward, but his mind and will prevailed over the fear in the body.

MYSELF: S came back again ! But I can't get the head or tail of his symptoms. Now he says one thing, now another.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother stopped his hot water and tiffin carrier. He lamented about fever, liver pains and what not (that's his plea) for continuing them. I told him if he had such bad health, he must be under medical treatment, not rushing about everywhere and eating whatever he likes. He said doctor's treatment no good. But I suppose he has gone back either in the hope of your restor-

ing his hot water and carrier or just to prove that cold water and Aroumé don't agree with him.

MYSELF: Tomorrow I think we shall start santonin and watch.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother says why give santonin to a healthy fellow and spoil his health? She has a strong suspicion that S's illness may now have become diplomatic ache and strategic fever.

23. 9. 36

MYSELF: Good Lord, your writing is exceeding all limits, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Transformation of handwriting. The self exceeds all limits, the handwriting should do so also.

MYSELF: Lord, Sir, I don't know what to make of your yesterday's writing.

SRI AUROBINDO: You seem to have made it out all right.

MYSELF: S is running a temperature of 99° morning and afternoon — 'strategic'?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps it is the grief of his lost tiffin carrier that gave him that.

MYSELF: A says that he can't work more than he would like to.

SRI AUROBINDO: What's that? Why should he want to work more than he would like to? Do you mean "as much as" by any chance?

MYSELF: My boil has burst!!

SRI AUROBINDO: Hurrah!

MYSELF: Shall I try some protein injections on Shivalingam?

SRI AUROBINDO: You can try. He is solid and stolid.

MYSELF: Or shall I let him go on with slight pain and swelling till the Supramental descends?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir. Supramental does not want to have to deal with swelled things, either heads, legs or stomachs.

24. 9. 36

MYSELF: S was given *sudarshan* yesterday — hasn't turned up at all today. Bitter has produced bitterness?

SRI AUROBINDO: By George! But that's a drastic remedy if he is malingering. He will cry again "Trust not in doctors."

MYSELF: N's leg is much better now.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is actually the matter with N's leg? What's the cause of the thing? He proposes to give it rest for one year, so as to cure it entirely. But that seems to me the other extreme to straining it unnecessarily by over strenuous walking. After the year of rest, it might want to rest all the life. What's your idea?

28. 9. 36

MYSELF: Even if I understood the paeon, I can't understand your dactyl? Pterodactyl?

SRI AUROBINDO: I wrote dactyl when I meant anapaest, so you may call it a pterodactyl. Your infection, sir —

30. 9. 36

MYSELF: By the way, please make a rule henceforth not to accept sadhaks before they pass a medical exam. Don't you realise, Sir, what potential troubles are ahead with so many invalids?

SRI AUROBINDO: You are quite right with a million times a million rightness.

No time for comments on rest. Too many urgent calls from R.

3. 10. 36

MYSELF: I believe Mother transmitted her Force through these homeopathic medicines, but when R went out of them to the chlorodyne and didn't let you know, the danger was signalled.

SRI AUROBINDO: How can you believe that when everything is explained according to medical science? There is no place left there for Mother's Force or any force except Valle-Force.

MYSELF: Whatever was given to her — glucose etc., met with opposition from R.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite natural for a homeopath, just as your sneering at homeopathic theories and treatment is natural in an allopath.

MYSELF: Why didn't your Force prove decisive in this case? About the Supermind and its failure over hostile forces, I give you the chance to bombard me or else I will.

SRI AUROBINDO: What has the Supermind to do here? Who told you that I was using the Supramental Force? I have said all along that it was not the Supramental Force that was acting. If you want the Supramental Force, you had better go to J of Chittagong. I hear from Chittagong that the Supramental Force is descending in him.

I have put down a few comments to throw cold water on all this blazing hot allopathism. But all these furious disputes seem to me now of little use.

6. 10. 36

MYSELF: M's urine was examined — contains pus; detailed report tomorrow. Now giving urotropine etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Those are the hieroglyphics on the Valle paper? They are not Greek to me, but Amheric.

MYSELF: He has also a bad type of contagious dis-

ease. I consulted Valle, he advised serum injection.

SRI AUROBINDO: Christ! And yet you attribute the sufferings of these people to the Supramental Force!

MYSELF: By the way, what is happening? Supramental descending? P is going phut. Some passing blood, some vomiting blood, another died devoid of blood! P was saying all sorts of things.

SRI AUROBINDO: It appears that P has recognised that his Purushottama¹ head was indeed all phut! He says he felt some evil forces making him do and say these things but he was so helpless that he was forced to obey them! That is a fall from Purushottama heights, but a return to sanity, if only temporary. (But let us hope it will increase.) For that is evidently what happened.

MYSELF: All thought that he was doing serious sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO: Serious? You mean not to sleep and all that sort of thing? Well, it is just that kind of seriousness which brings these attacks — earnestness of this sort does call down that kind of Purushottama or rather call him in, for it is a horizontal, not a vertical descent.

MYSELF: As a result, Purushottama descended into him and he was calling Sri Aurobindo to come and bow to him, what next? Makes me shake to the bones!

SRI AUROBINDO: Next? Perhaps he will want you also to come and bow to him and pummel you if you don't. Only the bones?

MYSELF: Already I am feeling awfully pulled down, on top of that M sits; and the Purushottama crowns them all. I ask myself — whither are you going, my friend and what awaits you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps the Paratpara Purusha beyond even the Purushottama.

But why this pulledownness? You are not pulling down Purushottama or any other gentleman from the upper storey, are you? It is strain and want of rest, I

¹ The Supreme Person.

suppose. Sleep, sleep ! Read Mark Twain or write humorous stories. Then you will be chirpy and even M won't feel heavy to you.

7. 10. 36

MYSELF: You write — 'for me all are only outward means and what really work are unseen forces !' Can you amplify this a little further ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, do you think I have time for your interesting questions ? I have had three nights' work to do in a single night — and in that my table lamp gone. In other perhaps fre-a-er off times.

J's poem held back.

8. 10. 36

MYSELF: I feel wretched, absolutely done for.

Feel like jumping into the sea,

Or hanging myself from a tree !

SRI AUROBINDO: Why ? Disburden yourself !

9. 10. 36

MYSELF: Disburden ? You mean throw off the burden or place the burden at your door ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both !

MYSELF: Please give me some Force for writing. But I wonder if you have time for circulating it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not as much as is necessary.

MYSELF: The atmosphere seems to be thick with doubt etc. A lull over the Ashram. Storm brewing ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Panic seems to be the order of the day as well as doubt. The storm seems to have brewed. I am fighting it at present, having been obliged to give up my Abyssinian campaign and stop the march to Gore. However !

MYSELF: I find that there is a change of views on your part about the Supermind's descent and the work of conquering death for humanity. Formerly I thought everything depended on your own success; now it seems a lot depends on us in this vital matter....

SRI AUROBINDO: In what does this change of views consist? Did I say that nobody could die in the Ashram? If so I must have been intoxicated or passing through a temporary aberration.

As for the conquest of death, it is only one of the sequelae of supramentalisation — and I am not aware that I have forsworn my views about the supramental descent. But I never said or thought that the supramental descent would automatically make everybody immortal.... If it did, the logical consequence would be that the whole earth, men, dogs and worms would suddenly wake up to find themselves supramental. There would be no need of an Ashram or of Yoga....

MYSELF: Do you think that N by his sadhana will have the conquest of death?

SRI AUROBINDO: That depends on whether he is still alive and not quite liquified and able to open physically when the conditions change.

MYSELF: About S, the 'coldish' feeling was absent. Lot of sweating at night, fever in the afternoon — 99.8.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has been sleeping with J who has developed occult terrors since P's outbreak and contracting the terror himself and had ———¹ etc. of a blood-curdling character. We must allow for S's vivid literary style. But I send you the documents as you are in medical charge.

11. 10. 36

MYSELF: By the way, the fear of death has to be *executed mercilessly* out of T by your letters and advice.

¹ Word indecipherable.

SRI AUROBINDO: Umph ! He wanted his brother to come and receive his last will and testament. I told him I saw no pressing need for troubling the brother.

12. 10. 36

MYSELF: S says, "I have no hunger," but when pressed he says, "Yes, I like food better now." There is S !

SRI AUROBINDO: He says the Mother has entered his stomach and is occupying it !! I say, confidential you know ! Such secrets are precious.

MYSELF: Goodness knows what inspired you to pick up such a blessed place for your Ashram ! A most hopeless hospital with hardly any facilities ! A heaven indeed for a Supramental colony !

SRI AUROBINDO: Had no medical standards in view when I came to Pondicherry — nor any views about establishing an Ashram. A supramental colony obviously ought to have a first class hospital, but no such colony was then intended.

14. 10. 36

MYSELF: If the Supermind descends into you or into the earth consciousness, the question of faith or sadhana becomes irrelevant as regards death, for death is a Force and, when you conquer it or have control over it, it means that its supremacy is lost in this part of the world, whether I have faith or not, do sadhana or not.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, man. What is this reasoning ? Everything is a Force; why should the supramental descent into me or earth assure complete and universal immediate conquest of this Force only or specially among so many ?

MYSELF: Even if one does sadhana, illness may come and snatch one away; then one's chance of supramentali-

sation is lost. Will not one now be protected and allowed a chance ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but that is simply warding off death. Perhaps the supramental will do that — (it can, if it wants) — but not for ever. I mean if a man wants 200 years to supramentalise himself, it can't be promised that he will be kept alive till then.

MYSELF: One final word I want from you. Wouldn't your supramentalisation make death impossible in the Ashram ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not in the sense that anybody can seek refuge in the supramentalised Ashram against death and sit comfortably there without any intention of doing sadhana.

MYSELF: The supramental force can create the best conditions which the Divine Force can't ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

MYSELF: ...But surely the action of the supramental force would be different from that of the Divine Force ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

MYSELF: ...or would they be fundamentally the same, only different at points ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

MYSELF: Here is the typescript of the letters written on the 9th for correction.

SRI AUROBINDO: No time to expatiate or divagate.

MYSELF: S's stomach is no more 'gloomy' — bright and cheerful today. I am tempted to dance in glee. Is it the Force or Pancrinol, or both ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You forget that the Mother occupied it. What's this Pancrinol ? All-hair ? All-what ? or has it to do with the Pancreas ?

MYSELF: A's bleeding has to be stopped. V seems to be very enthusiastic over him !

SRI AUROBINDO: What's that ? Enthusiastic over his bleeding ? V's enthusings are generally catastrophic to the enthused over.

15. 10. 36

MYSELF: You have kept that typescript ? I am finished then ! I know it will have the same fate as the previous one. However, I send the book in the off-chance of an expiation or a divagation.

SRI AUROBINDO: ———, ———¹ ! I prefer to excavate instead.

MYSELF: But why is it so extremely private ? There is nothing after all that is explosive there !

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know what will or will not explode in this Ashram ? Anyhow private it is and must remain so.

MYSELF: By the way, after a long time I enjoyed two or three days' true Nirodian (i.e. unyogic) jollity, but the yogic Nirodian gloom has restarted ! Goodness knows why these glooms and blooms come and go !

SRI AUROBINDO: Goodness doesn't know why, nor does anybody else.

MYSELF: You have finished the prospective action of the Supramental Force by two 'yes' and one 'no'. Evidently you are shy about it, or time is shy ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Time and I both are shy, good reason why.

(Nishikanta says rhyme is quite common in Bengali prose, so why not in English also ?)

17. 10. 36

MYSELF: M said, "Mixture very bitter, can I take *pān*² after it ?" I said 'do'. Now I hear her saying that I've asked her to take *pān*. Ladies in the Ashram are really wonderful !

¹ Two words indecipherable.

² Betel-leaf.

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, such ladies are quite wonderful outside the Ashram also. M didn't need to come here to be marvellous in that way.

MYSELF: Reading about T and S etc. confirms my disgust. You have made fine specimens of them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Were they all reasonable and consistent in their former life ?

MYSELF: Well, Sir, you have made people believe that medicines and doctors are no good and at the same time could not infuse into them sufficient faith in you. Result — they have fallen between two stools !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, T and S used both to get cured without medicines once on a time. The later development has evidently come for your advantage so that you may have elementary exercises in *samatā*. I have had a lot of schooling in that way and graduated M.A. Your turn now.

If you had treated them in the pre-Ashram period, do you think their comments if not at once cured would have been more filled with a holy awe and submission to the doctors ?

MYSELF: Really they are so touchy, so funny ! The more one sees, the more one wants to see ! Perhaps you will say — 'Judge not lest ye be judged !'

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly — for these are poor little uneducated people. But are the big brains at bottom less unreasonable and insistent ? All alike, sir, in one way or another. Man who is a reasoning animal no doubt, but not a reasonable one.

19. 10. 36

MYSELF: S is better now. All Pancrinol exhausted. Shall we buy more or wait and see ?

SRI AUROBINDO: "Wait and see" is always a very good formula.

MYSELF: I thought that it is not possible to have spi-

ritual experiences, especially major ones, without your previously having knowledge about them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Previously ? My God, we would have to spend all our time prevising the sadhaks' experiences. Do you think Mother has nothing else to do ? As for myself, I never revise anything, I only revise and revise....

20. 10. 36

MYSELF: S is much better in the morning nowadays, but troublesome in the afternoon. Getting cured by halves ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope so. Half by half is better than nothing.

MYSELF: Dr. S has a touch of cold ! Please save; no more patients, especially big and bulky ones !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, prevent the cold from becoming bulky.

MYSELF: M has been troubled by D's 'ghost'. He told me he had a dream and heard a voice calling him....

SRI AUROBINDO: Sorry, have to postpone M's ghostly troubles till tonight. Terrible night the last ! (No, no — wasn't attacked by a pseudo-D, only by the demon of correspondence.)

Have written, trying to cheer him up in the meanwhile.

22. 10. 36

MYSELF: I had another dream of death also !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if you go on dreaming like that !

MYSELF: What B.P. is doing, you know, is something criminal. Why not buy him a ticket ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Evidently ! We have already tried to chuck him once, but failed — because he had nowhere to go. I will have a try again even if we have to buy him a ticket for Nowhere.

MYSELF: Your Force is acting, Sir, and many pots

will break. Am I one, I wonder !

SRI AUROBINDO: Need not be. Hope you have no inclinations that way.

23. 10. 36

MYSELF: Please, Guru, try to percolate a little occultism through the thick sieve of your correspondence. I lost all hope, you know, and was depressed, dejected and downcast. It is so very interesting — that occultism !

SRI AUROBINDO: All right. I can flood you when I have time and season.

MYSELF: I am preparing my confession ! Perhaps tomorrow !

SRI AUROBINDO: Very good. Shall await the revelation.

25. 10. 36

MYSELF: S's pain must be stopped. Fever is there but not so bad.

SRI AUROBINDO: What a painful fellow !

26. 10. 36

MYSELF: You wrote to me yesterday that we should drop the "mixing" together and cooking. How to drop the mixing, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I did not write "mixing" — I wrote "messaging" — food, sir, food; eating in common, sort of psycho-gastric communion forming a spiritual culinary joy. If you want occultism, you shall have it with a vengeance.

MYSELF: If one has a double attachment, would it be an insincerity ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the ideal. If it were a matter of the union of two lives, it would be an insincerity, a faithlessness; but for the vital ? Its character is

to change, sometimes to multiply, to run here and there. Unless of course it is caught, glued to a single attraction or passion for a long period or for a lifetime. But in such gluings it is generally one of the two that is entangled, the other skirmishes around dragging his living appendage or else leading it half glued, half dropped.

27. 10. 36

MYSELF: What Sir ? No comment, not a line or word or even a scratch about D's madness ! Felt heavy the whole day thinking of this mystery !

SRI AUROBINDO: No mystery. Simply a case of *adhyāropa* of Shankaric illusion. Made mental answers and thought they were there physically inscribed on your blank page.

MYSELF: Some believe that he is not only all right but much better. Their judgment is based on the Mother's gracious smiles to him.

SRI AUROBINDO: What queer logicians !

28. 10. 36

MYSELF: Here is the photograph of the two sisters Jatin speaks of. One of them seems to have written to you. Both of them are keen on Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: From A's letter I couldn't say that they know much about what Yoga is !

MYSELF: They seem to be quite healthy soldieresses. We want healthy people, Sir, not marasmics or plethorics !

SRI AUROBINDO: Health is needed but health is "not enough". Besides, trust not in appearances. Soldiers and soldieresses sometimes become pathological — nerves, shell-shocks etc.

MYSELF: I woke up at 3 a.m. and tried to meditate.

No sooner had I sat down than I felt a *stabdhatā*¹ and the atmosphere around was so quiet that I felt or imagined some presences there. I thought if at this lone hour some of these presences catch me, what shall I do? I got very frightened!

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce did you get afraid for? Supposing any were there, you could have waited at least to see whether they were good presences or bad. If good, no harm; if bad, you have only to tell them to skidaddle....

29. 10. 36

MYSELF: S told me that once while he was meditating at dead of night, some force came and gripped his neck.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that is quite possible. If it does one has only to keep it away and say, "Get off, you fool." Or if you are not vigorous enough to do that call the Mother's force.

MYSELF: Buddha, they say, died of dysentery due to pork-eating.

SRI AUROBINDO: Modern scholars have cleared Buddha of that carnivorous calumny. They say it was a vegetable root called *śūkarkhaṇḍa* which ignorant commentators have mistranslated "piece of a pig".

MYSELF: Dysentery, as you know, is caused by a germ, and germs get into the pork by flies being there at the instance of forces?

SRI AUROBINDO: It isn't. It is instrumentated by a germ. What about the vegetable root? Flies also. But why should not flies be instruments for illness just as you are instrument for curing?

MYSELF: What about Ramakrishna dying of cancer? But he was an Avatar!

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should he not? Why on earth

¹ Stillness.

limit the possibilities of an Avatar ?

MYSELF: S asked for meals at home. Because of the rainy weather he says he feels unwell. How can I refuse when a healthy fellow like myself — ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What delicate people all are becoming ! A feather will hunch them down. Can't bear this, can't stand that. Evidently they are approaching the heights of supramental Yoga.

[While writing the report, I wrote the name of a patient as Ambala instead of Ambalal.]

SRI AUROBINDO: I say ! this is the name of a town, not of a person.

1. 11. 36

MYSELF: Guru, this is the month when your thrice blessed disciple came into the physical world. But I am thinking again — what will the poor Guru do if the big disciple doesn't fulfil the conditions ? Is that so ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The one hope is then that he may last on to fulfil the conditions without his knowing that he is doing it ! What do you think of that device ?

2. 11. 36

MYSELF: What do I think of that 'device' ? What can I think, Sir ? That is the only straw I am obliged to clutch at, but it may prove too weak for my burden. I am doubtful of the device because you must have tried it also in many other cases that have failed.

SRI AUROBINDO: The cases that have failed are those that have gone the wrong way — which is another kind of difficulty altogether.

MYSELF: Sir, how to solve T's lying down problem, I don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rack your brains and solve it.

MYSELF: Should I resume my hospital visits now ? But

cycles aren't allowed to be taken out in rainy weather ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is because the rider gets wet and the bicycle rusted. But if you can arrive at an understanding with Benjamin — .

There is an application for permanent residentship I, son of B, husband of A. He had made himself something like a physical wreck in Africa, says he is all right now. Mother wants you to be very strict in your examination; also I have told him to give past history. First result of your suggestion for a preliminary examination of candidates !

4. 11. 36

MYSELF: I have found only one line of a poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: Go ahead. Open the tap.

8. 11. 36

MYSELF: Guru, I send you this incomplete masterpiece of mine. Such a one that I feel tempted to throw it head down into — , still to be fair, the first 8 lines, I suppose, can stand on their feet. But the rest ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. These are all right. Afterwards you seem to have haled down by the hair of the head some lines which don't quite know where they are or what you are driving at. They have therefore not much life in them....

10. 11. 36

MYSELF: I have been furiously thinking what is the use of blessed literature after all, if the nature remains just the same ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good heavens ! where did you get this idea that literature can transform people ! Literary people are often the most impossible on the face of the earth.

MYSELF: Is literature going to transform it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't suppose so. Never did it yet.

MYSELF: I have neither the strong will nor the sustained effort to do it. The best way is to surrender — I am forced to do it — and keep quiet, quiet, which I am trying to do. But, Sir — !

SRI AUROBINDO: According to the affirmation of people acquainted with the subject, the preliminary preparation before getting any yogic experiences worth the name may extend to 12 years. After that one may legitimately expect something. You are far from the limit yet, so no reason to despair.

11. 11. 36

MYSELF: I didn't mean that literature can transform people. We may have progressed in literature, but the outer nature remains almost the same. So I am thinking of using my effort and labour in the direction of sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is another question altogether. But such sadhana means a slow and laborious work of self-change in most cases (twelve years, you know), so why not sing on the way !

MYSELF: It seems one must have sensitiveness or sensibility in order to be an artist. Otherwise, one cannot create. Artists can't also stand criticism.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not quite that. Sensibility, yes. One must be able to feel things. Exaggerated sensitiveness is not necessary. Men of genius have generally a big ego, can't be helped, that.

T weeps oceans if criticised. L goes red etc. It's the mark of the tribe.

13. 11. 36

MYSELF: When you bring in the examples of Milton

and Virgil in poetry and the number of years in Yoga, you forget that they had no Supramental Avatar as Guru to push them !

SRI AUROBINDO: Considering that the Supramental Avatar himself is quite incapable of doing what X or Y do, i.e. producing a poem or several poems a day, why do you bring him in ? In England indeed I could write a lot every day but most of that has gone to the Waste Paper Basket.

MYSELF: If you mean seriously that I have to wait 12 years, you will drive me to commit suicide, I tell you. Things are bad enough, Sir, and 'sing on the way' indeed !

SRI AUROBINDO: The rule of 12 years is one announced not by me, but many Sannyasis and people who know about Yoga. Of course they are "professionals", so to speak, while this is an Ashram of amateur yogis who expect quick results and no labour and if they don't get it, talk about despair and suicide.

MYSELF: Yet, I suppose I could try to sing a little, you know, if X didn't grip my throat. This makes it absolutely necessary for me to have the Divine quick and quick and pull him down.

SRI AUROBINDO: Other people have had the same but they didn't expect the Divine quick and quick as a medicine for the X complex.

MYSELF: I have no other way but to surrender to the Divine, leaving Him to lead me through fire or flower as He decides best. Can I sing, honestly ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see why not ? D used to sing whenever he felt suicidal.

15. 11. 36

MYSELF: What is meant by feminine women or masculine women ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Feminine is not used in opposition

to masculine here, but means only a wholly unrelievedly feminine woman — a capricious, fantastic, unreasonable, affectionate — quarrelsome, sensual — emotional, idealistic — vitalistic, incalculable, attractive — intolerable, never-knows-what-she-is or what-she-isn't and everything else kind of creature. It is not really feminine, but is the woman as man has made her. By the way, if you like to add some hundred other epithets and double epithets after searching the Oxford dictionary you can freely do so. They can all be fitted in somehow.

MYSELF: Guru, day after tomorrow is my blessed birthday. The year has gone round and the prophecy that at the age of 32 my troubles will be over, has well — ! [vide 3. 11. 35]

SRI AUROBINDO: Thirty second year over ? Perhaps in the "will be over" over has a different significance !

16. 11. 36

MYSELF: M says the doctor (M.B. only) in Calcutta didn't advise quinine without blood examination.

SRI AUROBINDO [putting a question mark on 'M.B. only']: What's this algebra ?

I send you one of S's missives. The last para is private and non-medical but apart from that you may perhaps convey to B the substance of this despatch — the horrible tale of the alarming Lila that is going on in her stomach. Please return the epistle.

17. 11. 36

MYSELF: Guru, any impression of the Mother's on my birthday ? I am afraid I wasn't calm but the whole day I felt peaceful.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother's verdict is "Not at all bad — I found him rather receptive." So, sir, cherish your receptivity and don't humbug about with doubt and des-

pondency and then you will be peaceful for ever !

MYSELF: Quinine was given to M. But I suppose it is not any more necessary as it is evident. I know your views against quinine but what can we give instead ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know. If it is a necessary evil, it must be administered, I suppose.

18. 11. 36

MYSELF: C has asked your advice and protection for going to Chittagong in January.

SRI AUROBINDO: *Protection is possible, advice not.*

19. 11. 36

MYSELF: Guru, Mother said I was receptive ? But how ? I don't know really ! That is the whole trouble in your Yoga, Sir, that everything goes in an unconscious stream.

SRI AUROBINDO: How the devil can you know, when you are not conscious ? It always does in the earlier stages.

MYSELF: Does the psychic come to the front even though the vital is impure ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it may, anything is possible; but if it does, it will certainly say, "Fie, fie, what ! All this dirt in the temple, sweep me the temple clean."

MYSELF: But in spite of all these things which you say are not mine alone, if I could get rid of these two devils — doubt and despondency !

SRI AUROBINDO: They are not uniquely yours either.

MYSELF: Z does not claim to know any sadhana but still to have an inner peace and joy. It must be true, for I find Z very happy and cheerful.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, yes, many people are like that. Calm or peace or happiness or cheerfulness, so long as there is no cause for disturbance, but immediately there

is, then boil, seethe, simmer, growl, howl, yowl ! The calm which causes of disturbance cannot disturb is the thing.

MYSELF: You say the working of the Force is not altogether in vain in spite of serious defects in people's nature. But surely they also must have satisfied some conditions ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, of course. But it varies with different people. It may be faith, it may be earnestness and persistence. It may be love for the Divine. There are many other things, it may be like the Mohamedan with his tuft, you must give a handle somewhere for the Angel of the Lord to catch hold of you and lift you up.

MYSELF: Otherwise I could have those experiences as well, but I can't, why ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mind bubbling, vital disturbed and despondent, physical inert.

MYSELF: Or would you say that it has taken them 7 or 8 years ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it has — what you would call damned slow progress — but, slow or not, they arrive.

20. 11. 36

MYSELF: I have a bad frontal headache, feverish, hope no complication of left frontal sinus suppuration ! Help, Guru !

SRI AUROBINDO: What's all this ? Is this a time to start suppurating sinuses ? Drop it, please.

21. 11. 36

MYSELF: Guru, O Guru,
My head, my head
And the damned fever —
I am half dead !
With pain and pressure,

But blessed liver
Functions quite well,
Please send the others
To hell, oh to hell !

SRI AUROBINDO: Cheer up ! Things might have been so much worse. Just think if you had been a Spaniard in Madrid or a German Communist in a concentration camp ! Imagine that and then you will be quite cheerful with only a cold and headache. So

Throw off the cold,
Damn the fever.
Be sprightly and bold
And live for ever.

MYSELF: What's to be done ? How to drop it ? Is it the blessed cold only or any Force to boot that is causing havoc in the head ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know of any Force. Do you think it is some pressure making the difficulty in the head ooze out of it ? If so —

MYSELF: For it started, you know, on the very night I came from the Mother....

SRI AUROBINDO: Receptivity ?

MYSELF: Very funny that every time I take a resolution something happens and ties me down. Why ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably the adverse forces get frightened and put in an undercut or overcut to knock you out of tune.

MYSELF: I was proud that I was immune to illness ! But the very cold pulls me down, and that too at Darshan time ! Again bad luck, Sir ! There is a proverb in Bengali which means that one who is unlucky, is unlucky everywhere, even in a *nemontonno*¹ he doesn't get anything. I hope you remember the familiar word *nemontonno* !

SRI AUROBINDO: I do, though it belongs to the far off past for me.

¹ Literally an invitation: here to a party.

22. 11. 36

MYSELF: I am better today, Sir. But what about the lack of interest in everything ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't understand. You want to get rid of the interest in everything or to get rid of the lack of interest ?

MYSELF: Imagination of Madrid or Concentration camp will have a reverse effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: What reverse effect ? Increase of cold and headache ?

MYSELF: By the Guru ! Please don't forget to give a supramental kick to my main impediments at Darshan; only no after-effects please, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: "By the Guru" ! What kind of oath is this ? But the object of the imagination was not to liberate your nose or forehead but to liberate your soul.

Kicking is easy. As to the effects or after-effects, that has to be seen.

25. 11. 36

MYSELF: Guru, I feel I must seriously write now — take the Muse by the forelock. Otherwise she is too high and proud, but your help is needed. You said afternoon is your fag end, so every time I feel unsupported then. I will shift it to the lonely quiet night, to get your bright and energetic beginning. What ? Approved ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not objected to at least provided you don't stay wrestling with the Muse till the small hours of the morning.

27. 11. 36

MYSELF: A perfect sonnet ! What do you think of the first line, Sir ? "My clouded soul, do you know where

you are ?" Flat ? and the *clouded* soul ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Flat ? by God, sir, abysmal ! The soul can get as clouded as it likes but do you know where you are ? In Pondicherry, sir, in Pondicherry — the most clouded soul can know that. You might just as well now write "My friend, do you know that you are an ass ?" and call it metre and poetry.

Note well —

1) It is absolutely unrhythmical to stress a number of unstressed syllables in a line suppressing the true accents — such broken backed lines are unmetrical and intolerable e.g.

Do yóu/know ún/der thé/garb óf/the night.
You might just as well write,

They weré/married tó/géthér/in á pantry/
or

Oh, why/do you/perpé/trate súch/horrórs/

MYSELF: Does the trochee in the word 'vision', spoil the rhythm ?

SRI AUROBINDO: By God it does. If the syllable before were an accented one the trochee would be all right. But this can only read,

But how/can lim/ited vi/sion surmise/ ?
A quadruped, sir, a quadruped.

MYSELF: What about the thought, sequence, etc. ? Please show the defects with the opinion and criticism. Is it a metaphysical or a philosophic poem ?

SRI AUROBINDO: God knows ! But the matter is that the metre of some of your lines is enough to make the hair of a prosodist stand on end in horror ! I have marked all the quadrupeds you have created *in situ* — also put in the margin my five-footed emendations of them.

28. 11. 36

MYSELF: What a pity the poem was spoiled by those

quadrupeds ! and I can't have the full claim over it. But why can't I ? Since I am a part of the Lord — am I not — I can just as well say I have done it. Any objection ?

SRI AUROBINDO: None at all.

MYSELF: Today after reading your remarks on the poem, oh what a joy I felt ! In spite of your calling me an 'ass', Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: I only made you call somebody else one.

MYSELF: Let me whisper to you that after this Darshan something somehow has happened somewhere to make me cheerful and jolly, though you didn't seem to have given me a very warm reception — because of my damn cold ?

SRI AUROBINDO: There was no absence of warmth — it may be your cold that made it seem so to you.

MYSELF: And though Mother now and then rolls her eyes, which make me roll in misery for one or two hours....

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish !

MYSELF: D also says he is very happy. So we both combine to give you this good news. You may congratulate yourself on some tremendous success you have achieved ! What's the secret, Sir ? Supramental in view ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Supramental "in view" long ago. To reach is the thing.

MYSELF: Danger zone crossed ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't say that, yet.

MYSELF: Ah, if this joy remains so ! will it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope so.

MYSELF: I had a funny feeling, that my body was lying on the bed and some separate part seemed to be up and attending a kirtan¹ in A's room. Any significance ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why the deuce do all you people ask always what significance ? If you walked out of your

¹ Religious singing.

house in boots, leaving your slippers or sandals behind that would be a fact, but with no significance except that you had boots. You went out in your subtle body and listened to the Kirtan of the vital plane in A's room, leaving your body to snore (or not) in yours. Quite a common affair, only shows that you have become aware of the boots, i.e. of your subtle body and its exits.

29. 11. 36

MYSELF: Boil again inside the right nostril ! But perhaps you will ask me to imagine being a Spaniard, German, Jew, Japanese, etc. ! All right, Sir, I will imagine all these if you will imagine giving me a dose of Force, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is for you to do that. I can only send Force.

30. 11. 36

MYSELF: Boil paining, what to do ? Suffer with a smile ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Smile awhile.

2. 12. 36

MYSELF: Sonnet emended by Amal. He has changed the metrical errors as well as lines which seemed to him un-English.

SRI AUROBINDO: And what errors, my God ! For heaven's sake don't try the irregular dodge yet. It doesn't succeed with you.

MYSELF: Amal has changed the second line because of metre and 'carmine' as it has no special significance. The line now is:

"The shimmering foliage and the smiling flower,
The pale suspense of water round a steep..."

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously. But "smiling" is rather old. I thought of putting "glimmering", or "the shimmer of foliage on the glimmering flower," but perhaps Amal would shout.

3. 12. 36

[The reference is to X's poem.]

MYSELF: No, I don't know anything about the roses being opened by the rhythm of Nature or the Bride. Hence the question to know what you know.

SRI AUROBINDO: What I know is ineffable.

MYSELF: But you seemed to have been in the worst of moods, due to heavy correspondence?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, the best.

MYSELF: I hope you have had your fill of supramental glee by the merciless whipping on the inframental!

SRI AUROBINDO: It was all done for your good with the most philanthropical motive.

MYSELF: Your *Bird of Fire* is full of colour and images, but if one can follow the *bhāva*¹ behind or through them, I believe the appreciation becomes complete.

SRI AUROBINDO: What do you mean by following the *bhāva* behind? Putting a label on the bird and keeping it dried up in your intellectual museum, for Professors to describe—to their pupils—"this is the species and that's how it is constituted, these are the bones, feathers etc., etc., and now you know all about the bird. Or would you like me to dissect it farther?"

MYSELF: Suppose one said: "Why the devil do you want to know the meaning and not rest satisfied with the beauty of the expression?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Why the deuce are you dwelling on the poetry of the expression as if that were all one feels in a mystic poem and unless one dissects and analyses it one can't feel anything but words?

¹ Substance.

MYSELF: The little explanations you gave here and there of X's mystic poems enhanced the *rasa*.¹

SRI AUROBINDO: It didn't to me, it simply intellectualised all the *rasa* out of it.

MYSELF: What I mean to say is that intellectual understanding is necessary to fully appreciate the beauty and worth of a poem, otherwise one feels only a subtle joy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! Who is this "one" ?

4. 12. 36

MYSELF: All that whipping for my good ? 'With the most philanthropic motive' ? Gracious ! The only good was to stop me from asking questions about X's poem. But really what's the motive ? You want the mind to be completely silent ?

SRI AUROBINDO: At least decently silent — not always asking for an intellectual definition of everything mystic.

MYSELF: I am thinking of writing also in the afternoon, if that is your fag-end really, then can't Mother give me some Force ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very inappropriate time for her also. Besides, it is I who am directly running the Poetry Department. However I am now more sprightly from 2.30 to 4.30. After that, correspondence — no chance for poetry.

5. 12. 36

MYSELF: Nishikanta says that taking my poetry as a whole some command over expression and harmony is there, but the *vaktavya*² is not clearly expressed; either because the power of expression hasn't yet developed or I don't know what I want to say.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know about that.... I suppose he means that you have caught only a little of some-

¹ Aesthetic flavour.

² That which is intended to be conveyed.

thing that might be expressed — only a hair of the tail instead of the complete animal.

MYSELF: Can you give me your opinion? Is there no way to hasten the process?

SRI AUROBINDO: No; it will come all right as you grow. You are only an infant, just now.

MYSELF: I was feeling very happy, but the very next day a nebulous cloak of depression fell and I am still under it. Well!

SRI AUROBINDO: Tut, tut, tut! You really must get rid of this kind of thing, hang it all. Out of this kind of nebula no constellation can be made.

MYSELF: The funny thing is that S complains so much and says hunger also less, but looks none the worse.

SRI AUROBINDO: Are you sure he is not a "*malade imaginaire*"? — at least to a large extent?

7. 12. 36

MYSELF: Guru, yes, unfortunately I am an infant. But is infancy the reason, really? I thought it is a question of opening of some inner channel that is the secret. If that opens or is opened up, then the infant can grow old in a day.

SRI AUROBINDO: There you are illegitimately changing the metaphor. What has a channel to do with infancy and old age? You are doing in prose what you don't want J to do in poetry.

MYSELF: J, you know, was no better than an infant and she ran equal with me in poetry, didn't she? All of a sudden see where she is!

SRI AUROBINDO: Because there are infants and infants. Some grow quick, others slowly.

MYSELF: Should I then continue reading in the afternoon instead of writing?

SRI AUROBINDO: Unless you feel a sudden inspiration. Then throw the book aside and write.

MYSELF: It is really a little difficult for me to understand how the mind comes in the way, for I seem to think that whatever comes down, I jot down.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but why doesn't it come down like a cataract as in J's case or as a flood in D's?

MYSELF: Should one then keep absolutely silent and go on waiting for the things to drop?

SRI AUROBINDO: What else then is to be done? To hunt about for them? If so, you are likely to put in any damned thing, imagining it is better.

MYSELF: Mystic poetry is to some misty and mysterious!

SRI AUROBINDO: That is another matter. It is a question of personal idiosyncrasy. There are people who thrill to Pope and find Keats and Shelley empty and misty. The clear precise intellectual meanings of Pope are to them the height of poetry, the emotional and romantic suggestions of the *Skylark* or the *Ode to a Nightingale* unsatisfactory. How the devil, they ask, can a skylark be a spirit, not a bird? What the hell has "a glow-worm golden in a dell of dew" to do with the song of the skylark? They are unable to feel these things and say Pope would never have written in that incoherent inconsequential way. Of course he wouldn't. But that simply means they like things that are intellectually clear and can't appreciate the imaginative connections which reveal what is deeper than the surface. You can, I suppose, catch something of these, but when you are asked to go still deeper into the concrete of concretes, you lose your breath and say: "Lord! What an unintelligible mess. Give me an allegorical clue for God's sake, something superficial which I can mentally formulate." Same attitude as the Popists' — in essence.

A has written twice about some eruption she is having

— she said you would write to us about it, but there is no eruption in this book. Please let me know what it is. An “eruption” may mean anything from prickly heat to

9. 12. 36

MYSELF: S had no sleep at all last night. She has no trouble and yet no sleep! Mystery! Any yogic reason?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the new fashion with the Ashram Yogis — not to sleep.

12. 12. 36

MYSELF: Guru, I don't know why the Mother looked at me like that during the Pranam. Was I anywhere in the wrong?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother knows nothing about it.

MYSELF: I went over the whole incident and didn't find anywhere that I have misrepresented facts.

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

MYSELF: Or was it because I was bothering myself and you over a trifle?

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

MYSELF: It was not an illusion. Some meaning was there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes? But then it must have been a meaning in your mind not the Mother's! So only you its mother, can find it out.

MYSELF: Today Nishikanta is better. And mercury? Its strength is only 1% and used like anything in the hospitals and recommended in books.

SRI AUROBINDO: May be, but many people suffer much from it. Probably the method is to irritate Nature until she reacts? If so, — well!

14. 12. 36

MYSELF: How can I have any joy when what I write seems such poor stuff and delivered with much perspiration ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is your confounded nature. How can the Man of Sorrows feel joy in anything or any self-confidence ? His strain is "Oh how miserable am I ! Oh how dark am I ! Oh how worthless is all that I do." etc., etc.

MYSELF: The first portion of this poem I wrote almost dosing.

SRI AUROBINDO: This is a medical spelling.

MYSELF: Have you finished with Jatin's long letter regarding dreams, sleep-walking, etc. ? The reply is overdue, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: I have often tried to begin that, but it is a long affair and before putting pen to paper my courage wilted away.

20. 12. 36

MYSELF: Nolini has given me a copy (sent by the Mother) of the effects of *pān-supāri*.¹ Some people believe that it is a good exercise for the teeth, especially when here we don't take any meat.

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord ! I have known people who lost all their teeth at an early age by the habit.

Meat is good for the teeth ? Always heard the contrary. Besides millions who don't take meat have as good teeth as anybody in the world and don't need *pān-supāri* either.

MYSELF: But what should I do with this typed copy ? To enforce on patients ? Or others also ? A was repeatedly told, but — !

¹ Betel-nut and betel-leaf.

SRI AUROBINDO: That ! like one of my uncles who preferred taking his *pān* betel to keeping his teeth.

MYSELF: But, Guru, you must admit that *pān* has a sweet taste, or perhaps you are an utter stranger to it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Have taken it — can't say I found it very attractive or enticing. ভিন্ন রুচিহি লোকাঃ।¹

MYSELF: Jotindra's finger was incised suspecting pus, but there was hardly any. He says now there's much burning and throbbing pain.

SRI AUROBINDO: Premature incision not safe, I believe, in this kind of thing.

22. 12. 36

MYSELF: Your belief is right, Guru ! I didn't feel happy yesterday after the incision. However, nothing untoward has happened; almost no pain, but the swelling persists, asked to foment.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother suggests hot water, 1 part peroxide, 3 parts water and dipping the finger for 15 minutes. Some of these things are cured by that — it ought really to be done immediately but even now it may be effective.

23. 12. 36

MYSELF: Why that is almost exactly what we have advised Jotindra to do from the very start, only peroxide was not given.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are taking daily almost exactly the same thing as Anglo-Indians take in their clubs i.e. a peg. Only brandy and soda are not there — but the water is.

¹ Tastes differ.

28. 12. 36

MYSELF: I heard that R has a deep, very deep respect for you, if nothing else. He has followed closely your development, always. Hasn't he said after the interview with you — "You have the Word. We are waiting to have it" ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That was a long time ago. He is disappointed that I have not come out and started giving lectures in America and saving humanity. Sorry, but I have no intention of doing these things.

MYSELF: Am I wrong, Guru, though you make us wait and wait for years and years ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You want me to start going about and giving lectures. Sorry again, but quite out of the question.

MYSELF: You keep silent about the poem. If your pen can't gallop, you can ask it to trot ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very little chance of it. The only time I tried, a surrealist poem came out — so I have dropped the attempt.

MYSELF: How to avoid X's influence in poetry and strike a new path ? I am afraid I won't be able to write at all.

SRI AUROBINDO: As usual, anticipating trouble and misery ! Your position is always "That's got to be done. Oh, *what* a bother ! I shall never do it." While it should be, "Ah that's to be done ? All right then, it's going to be done."

MYSELF: Sadhana is sluggish, poetry bosh; joy, peace vaporised, and yet you say, "Are you ever satisfied ?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Poetry is not bosh — and joy, peace need not vaporise unless you pump them out of yourself instead of into yourself.

MYSELF: Why, Sir, dissatisfaction itself is a sign of a greater seeking.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is generally a twisting round and round in the same place round the centre of one's own dissatisfaction.

MYSELF: I don't know that you are satisfied with my condition either.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not depressed by it at any rate.

2. 1. 37

MYSELF: I won't lengthen my perorations and human reasonings. Will you give a satisfactory reply to all these questions tonight or tomorrow?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it can't be tonight, as there are three tons of correspondence. (It may be less of course in actual weight, I am giving the psychological estimate.)

4. 1. 37

MYSELF: Any answer, or tons of correspondence still?

SRI AUROBINDO: Plenty of tons. But the answer will be given when I have the questions and some leisure together.

7. 1. 37

MYSELF: Jatin asks me to send you these questions saying: "The answer is immanent but it wants clarification and there is Sri Aurobindo who will do it in a minute." So will you do it, Guru, in a minute?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. You must not ask impossible miracles from me.

8. 1. 37

MYSELF: One misgiving is pressing heavily on my soul. I sense and feel that the tone of your letters has suddenly become very grave, rough, stiff and gruff — the owl-

like severity with which you had once threatened me. Have I done anything to deserve punishment? Or is it because you are getting supramentalised day by day that you are withdrawing yourself so? There must be a reason if my sense-feel is correct. Well, if you want to press me between two planks and pulverise me.... Not that I want it, you know.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think your sense-feel has been indulging in vain imaginations, perhaps with the idea of increasing your concrete imaginative faculty and fitting you for understanding the unintelligible. As you have now much to do with mystic poetry, it may be necessary. But why object to being pulverised? Once reduced to powder, think how useful you may be as a medicine, Pulv. Nirod. gr II. Anyhow disburden your soul of the weight. I am not owed yet and my supramentalisation is going on too slowly to justify such apprehensions. Neither am I withdrawing, rather fitting myself for a new rush in the near or far future. So cheer up and send the Man of Sorrows with his 'planks' to the devil.

MYSELF: I find among patients here, especially ladies, that they want to be served quickly — 5 minutes at the most! They can't wait, they must go, they have work etc., etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Important people, you see — necessary for the world-action, লোকসংগ্রহায়।¹ Can't be kept waiting.

14. 1. 37

MYSELF: Since last two days I am feeling unaccountably rotten, sad, irritated, why? Force, please, O, please, please, for heaven's sake!

SRI AUROBINDO: No reason. If the Man of Sorrows gets grounds to wallow in agony, he wallows in the ground — if he doesn't he wallows in the waters — if waters are

¹ For the preservation of the worlds.

denied to him, he will wallow in the air. If not he will wallow in the void. But wallow he must. Even if you had written a poem as deep as the sea and as splendid as the sunrise he would still wallow, if that took his fancy — “wallow and luxuriously wail to the world and its Witness.”

MYSELF: I am slightly depressed about my poetry, Guru. It seems all mind-made.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is an extremely beautiful poem. What a grumbler you have got inside you ! After writing a thing like that, you ought to be licking your lips in satisfaction.

15. 1. 37

MYSELF: About ‘licking lips’, I shall perorate tomorrow.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the licked or the unlicked lips that are going to be vocal ?

16. 1. 37

MYSELF: In your day before yesterday’s letter I could not make out a word. Is it: ‘he wallows in the grave’ ? Gracious !

SRI AUROBINDO: *Ground*, sir, not *grave*. A ground need not be a grave.

17. 1. 37

MYSELF: I don’t know what this poem is driving at. It seems rather mixed up.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid I don’t know either. You have suddenly shot beyond Mallarmé and everybody else and landed yourself into the Surrealism of the most advanced kind. Such a line as *বিবসনা কঙ্কালের মরণ-প্রভাতে*¹

¹ In the morn that is the death of the naked skeleton.

would make any surrealist poet's heart wild with joy. I think, however, you should put up a petition to your Inspiration to rein in this gallop towards and beyond the latest Modernism and give us something less progressive and startling....

Great Scott ! I think I have unexpectedly solved the riddle.

Well, if my prophetic soul has rightly interpreted it, it is not 'mixed up' but it is recklessly audacious in its whirlingness of cryptic images. Spiritual surrealism with a vengeance.

MYSELF: C's letter, if you can make out anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: Have made something out of it by my immense power of divination.

18. 1. 37

MYSELF: You have asked me to send a petition to my Inspiration, but when the Inspiration is your Supramental Self ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me, no. This is not supramental poetry — so the inspirer can't be my supramental Self.

19. 1. 37

MYSELF: Excuse you ? What do you mean, Sir ? You give inspiration only for supramental poetry ? Startling news, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Where have I said that I give inspiration for supramental poetry —————¹ only or at all ? You said that your inspirer for this or for any other poem of yours was my supramental Self. I reply that it can't be, because the supramental Self would produce or inspire supramental poetry — and yours is not that, nor, I may add, is J's or D's or my own or anybody's.

¹ Word indecipherable.

MYSELF: We fondly believe that you give the inspiration, set apart a time for it, and now you say that you are not the Inspirer.

SRI AUROBINDO: I say that my supramental Self is not the inspirer — which is a very different matter.

MYSELF: Pray tell me the mystery. Why shirk the responsibility now, because a surrealist poem has come out? You are responsible for it, I think.

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me, no. As the Gita says, the Lord takes not on himself the good or the evil deeds (or writings) of any. I may send a force of inspiration, but I am not responsible for the results.

MYSELF: But did you seriously mean that I should send a petition? How to do it though?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not very seriously. I was only afraid that you might land us on the poetry of the 22nd century — and that might be a long time to wait for somebody to understand us.

MYSELF: All that I do is to remember you and call for your help, and whatever comes I jot down. If I don't do this, tell me then what to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: No need to do anything, but continue.

MYSELF: Really, Sir, this disclaimer of yours is terribly mysterious; the more I think of it the more I am puzzled.

SRI AUROBINDO: But there was no disclaimer. I simply got my supramental Self out of the way and left the brunt to be borne by my non-supramental Self.

MYSELF: All this time we have known, believed and prayed that you give us the inspiration and suddenly this?

SRI AUROBINDO: Suddenly what? My statement that your poetry is not supramental? Surely you did not think it was!

MYSELF: Please give a satisfactory reply; otherwise this dread will haunt me whenever I take up pen and paper.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! There is nothing to dread.

20. 1. 37

MYSELF: You have relieved me by your answer. But I thought you have only one Self — the Overmental or the Supramental.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why do you suppose me to be so poor in selves ? When everybody has several, I must content myself with one ?

MYSELF: Who is this "I" who sends the Force — which aspect, I mean ?

SRI AUROBINDO: "I" is a pronoun only = the Multifarious One.

MYSELF: It would be a pity to stop writing poetry till the 22nd century, if you had to wait for people to understand it. That would be unyogic.

SRI AUROBINDO: From one standpoint. From the other the prudence of postponing for the fitting century might be classed under যোগ: কর্মসু কৌশল¹. It would certainly be unpoetic.

MYSELF: What have you opined about that bizarre poem — 'Good' or 'grand' ? What's the word ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was good. I forgot that you didn't like "good" poetry, only "fine" and even "very fine". Let us then promote it to "fine", but stop short of "grand".

MYSELF: I can just make out the curve of r. Please solve, and soothe me a little.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are wrong; the 'r' curve was conspicuous by its absence. Perhaps I was trying to write in a certain kind of modern English style "grood" = "really good".

MYSELF: I wrote a beautiful poem but I can't show it to you for it was done in sleep and I have lost it. Pity isn't it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Great pity.

¹ Yoga is skill in works.

21. 1. 37

MYSELF: How can one like "good"? To you good, fine, extremely fine, may be all equal.

SRI AUROBINDO: Generally one likes good things and dislikes bad things. But you seem to dislike both, which is more Yogic in *samatā* (of a negative kind) than my attitude.

MYSELF: Only if I had been your critic in your pre-Divine days and pronounced 'good' about your poetry, I would have liked to see your reactions!

SRI AUROBINDO: My reaction would depend on whether it agreed with my estimate or not. If all my poetry were pronounced good by an undeniable authority I should be very pleased and perhaps even might lapse from Yogic heights into egoism.

MYSELF: Like 'good', I like fine less than very fine and exceedingly fine, obviously.

SRI AUROBINDO: In that case, you must dislike very fine poetry also and plump for the exceedingly fine only, but can any poet always and in every line and poem be exceeding?

MYSELF: I don't see how fine, very fine, exceedingly fine, can be placed on the same level, or how you expect us to like them equally.

SRI AUROBINDO: They may not be on the same level but they are all admirable — and good in its own way is admirable too.

MYSELF: Of course, if while saying only fine, you keep within yourself exceedingly, it will be equal to you. I can't see your within, Sir! 'It is good, not bad etc.' shows on the very face of it what it is.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but I can't be always turning my inside outside with a mathematical precision — especially at a first reading in a gallop. I put an impression or rather dash it down as it comes and it seems to drop

a “very” in the process or a good drops in = fine. In any case “good” does not mean “bad” or “poor”.

23. 1. 37

MYSELF: I think it is a very fine idea of beauty-loving Bengali people to conceive of flowers as feminine. Why should a lily, lotus or rose be masculine, with all their grace and charm ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No objection to flowers being feminine, but one's notions get topsy turvy when গন্ধীত¹ becomes feminine. Even so, it was the ambiguity created which is gravelling, not the transformation of gender.

MYSELF: They have no masculine properties or souls.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why then the seven brothers চন্দ্রক ?²

25. 1. 37

MYSELF: J says that if you don't see the poems to whom should she show them ? and what's the use of her writing ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Where did I say I wouldn't see them ? Too much femininity here !

28. 1. 37

MYSELF: I am very much amused to hear that you couldn't understand my yesterday's poem. But Nolini sees no difficulty at all. It does mean something positively.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it means something palpable to you, why don't you let me into the secret ?

MYSELF: But why do you want the meaning ? Poetry has to be felt, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Provided there is something to feel.

¹ Music.

² Name of a flower.

But if feeling is enough, why ask me or yourself for a meaning ?

MYSELF: I have used the word *ভাণা* in today's poem, it means as you must be knowing a sort of a vessel in which *pūjā* offerings are carried to the temple, so this *ভাণা*, can't it paint ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not known in the Royal Academy or any other this painter.

MYSELF: What sort of poetry am I writing ? Who is this Muse making this havoc as to founder even the Guru ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Surrealist — I suppose. My province doesn't go so far.

29. 1. 37

MYSELF: I knew that it meant something but not palpably enough to let you in. It was palpable to Nolini who said further that it reminded one of Baudelaire.

SRI AUROBINDO: A very big compliment, but I don't know that the parallel can be enforced very far.

MYSELF: I have used in today's poem *চিন্ময়ী আনা*¹, is it all right ?

SRI AUROBINDO: *চিন্ময়ী আনা* would make it more coherent — but what would then become of Baudelaire ?

MYSELF: You have said that your province doesn't go so far. How then does the surrealist intervene between your Force and my transcription ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Surrealist can intervene anywhere, provided the logical mind consents to be a little drowsy.

MYSELF: Lastly, you must be having additional work now. So shall we stop sending poems ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I don't know. If they are not too many conundrums —

Light full of consciousness.

31. 1. 37

MYSELF: It is strange that I get a thrill from these bizarre images. Your Inspiration will, I hope or fear, give me a Baudelairean fame — an immoral, vulgar poet !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a terrible prospect.

1. 2. 37

MYSELF: A terrible prospect ? Do you dread that I will find an “easy path into the world of macabre visions by hashish or opium” ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That’s why I call it terrible ! However let us hope that one day you will stop on the immoral path to Inferno.

MYSELF: Now a serious misgiving throttles me. It seems you don’t like the poems I am writing at present. Why, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why does it seem ?

MYSELF: Are they worse than ‘slow scolopendra’ which you like immensely ? Or is it that simple originality is not enough ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but I don’t like it seriously, only as fun. However your poems are not scolopendras — so that is not relevant.

MYSELF: In yesterday’s sonnet the sestet seemed to have a Baudelairean turn. Was it due to faulty transcription ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it was a good transcription of Baudelaire.

MYSELF: Or perhaps a fine mystic thing was coming, but the surrealist intervened and spoiled it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is certainly a change in the inspiration at that point. Probably Nolini’s suggestion has raised up or called down the spirit of Baudelaire and he is trying his best to write spiritual poems through you.

MYSELF: All these questions are in vain, I suppose, and over them you will give a cryptic smile !

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly.

MYSELF: You make an easy passage through the complicated constructions of D, Nishikanta and others, while I am your stumbling block !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sometimes your constructions are like a lot of finely dressed people (words) crowded together in a dancing-hall, but I don't know who is the wife of who, and who the bien-aimée, and who the paternal uncle and who the maternal grand niece. So I have to ask and fix their genealogy and general relations.

MYSELF: There is a conspiracy among the gods to take away the Mother into retirement: no Pranam henceforth. They have taken you already and if Mother follows, well, we can do the same one by one.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if people withdraw into themselves, they might find the Mother there !

MYSELF: We are already finding great difficulty in writing without the Touch. "Hé, writing !" you will shout. But writing is sadhana, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which sadhana ? Ah yes, I see —
অতি-বাস্তব পন্থা ।¹

4. 2. 37

MYSELF: About M's vomiting, Manilal says that since it is from birth, it has nothing to do with the accident. I wonder if it is the result of too much meditation and concentration which he used to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: But surely he did not do a lot of concentration before birth ?

6. 2. 37

SRI AUROBINDO: I send for information another tra-

¹ Surrealist path.

gic letter from X — which please return. It appears it is only a resuscitated X that is walking about the Ashram since yesterday afternoon !

I say — Dr. Hutchinson, President of the Royal Society of Medicine, — in London — says (vide “Sunday Times”, page 4) that if all the doctors struck work for a year, it would make no difference in the death rate. The doctors’ only use is to give comfort, confidence and consolation. Now what do you say to this opinion of your President ? Rather hot, isn’t it ?

7. 2. 37

MYSELF: Please don’t keep the Library book for long. Otherwise Premanand will lose all his *prem* and *ānand* !¹

SRI AUROBINDO: He is always doing that and losing his hair too into the bargain. If he objects to my keeping the book, I will give him a clout on the head which will help to keep his hair on.

8. 2. 37

MYSELF: Have you written:“... I will give him a *club* on the head...” ? He will die, Sir, but if he doesn’t a doctor will be needed !

SRI AUROBINDO: Clout, clout. A clout is a harmless thing — at most you will have to put a bandage.

MYSELF: ‘Our’ President’s theory is not only hot, but a little top-heavy it seems. If the doctor’s function is only to give consolation, I fear many patients visiting us will leave, cursing us. Take X’s case.

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the effectivity of your consoling words and confidence-giving drugs. Your words and cheery care may so boost X’s morale that it will affect his piles and if it can’t do altogether that, your medicines may give so much confidence to the piles that

¹ Love and bliss.

they will walk in and give up the ghost. But it is all a confidence trick in reality. If the piles are a curse and refuse confidence, well —

MYSELF: I proposed to one patient this consolation treatment; he agreed. Then I asked him, "How is it then that your old malady has come back which was supposed to have been cured by the doctor?" He answered, "But one doctor may fail and, besides, there is the Force." "Ah, you now bring in the Force!" Well?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that's the point. How did R or how does anybody cure? By his medicines or by his "confidence" imparted to the subconscious of the patient?

The Force is another matter. Your President Hutchinson or Henderson (or what the deuce was his name?) wasn't thinking in terms of Force.

MYSELF: Anyway, what is your opinion?

SRI AUROBINDO: My opinion is that Allah is great and great is the mystery of the universe and things are not what they seem, etc.

9. 2. 37

MYSELF: I have no energy to write or to fight. Down in the pool!

SRI AUROBINDO: Wade out and up.

12. 2. 37

MYSELF: I am a little disappointed, Sir. Every time there is any difficulty in expression, transition, etc., etc. you escape always by using the word "surrealist". What's this blooming surrealism now? At times I have to make a foolish face before people when I can't understand my own expressions.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why foolish? Make a mystic face and say "It means too much for owls." The difficulty is that you all want exact intellectual meanings for these

things. A meaning there is, but it can't always be fitted with a tight and neat intellectual cap.

My "surrealist" is a joke but not a depreciatory one.

13. 2. 37

[I had asked Sri Aurobindo on the 12th if I could put a stitch to S's small cut. There was no reply that day.]

SRI AUROBINDO: By the way did you do your tailoring work with S? I forgot to write that you could stitch away at him as much as necessary.

15. 2. 37

MYSELF: What a disappointment! I thought yesterday's poem was very fine. You said just 'fine'. It seems it is pretty hard to write exceedingly fine stuff in this kind of poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, I must reserve the adverbs or I shall have nothing to put in case you "exceed" yourself.

17. 2. 37

MYSELF: People will never understand my poetry, I feel! They will sarcastically say, "Surrealist! W.P.B!"

SRI AUROBINDO: "Write plenty of books"!

MYSELF: The other day Dilip said to M. Baron, "But one can't understand this surrealist poetry." He replied, "Why should you understand it?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly — why should you understand? When you can instand, overstand, roundstand, interstand, what's the need of understanding?

MYSELF: If you don't understand how do you pronounce fine, very fine, etc? By simple feeling?

SRI AUROBINDO: Queer fellow! As if feeling could

not go deeper than intellectual understanding !

MYSELF: It is like casting a net and depending on luck to catch small or big fish as may be. Is there any other way ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course there is. Find it out.

MYSELF: See, for instance, today's fish. Do you find any head or tail ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very nicely coloured gleaming fish.

[After translating this Bengali poem into English] Now, I don't know whether that was what you meant, but it is the meaning I find there. Very likely it has no head or tail, but it has a body and a very beautiful body — and I ask with Baron, why do you want to understand ? Why do you want to cut it up into the dry mathematical figures of the Intellect ? Hang it all, sir ! In spite of yourself you are making me a convert to the Housman theory and Surrealism. No, sir — feel, instand, overstand, interstand, but don't try to understand the creation of a supra-intellectual Beauty.

18. 2. 37

MYSELF: Can you make out the meaning of the queer phrase *নিরম্ব উত্থান*¹ used in today's poem ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Somebody who rose from dinner without being given water to wash his hands ? Or perhaps it's a personal reference ? As you have brought in Esha,² Ambu² might have come too.

MYSELF: Where does the poem strike you — at the solar plexus or lunar plexus ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It must be the Baron plexus. It is surely your contact with him that has started you on this line.

¹ *Nirambu utthān*. *Ambu* = water, *Utthān* = rise.

² Two disciples.

19. 2. 37

MYSELF: You are a most wonderful God, Sir ! More queer than my poems, if you don't mind my saying so ! You have been hammering this surrealism into my soul for such a long time and now you say I got it from Baron.

SRI AUROBINDO: You don't seem to have read carefully my letter to Dilip. I said your poems belong to the Dream Consciousness, but I had used the word Surrealism lightly i.e. your poems are not on a line with the actual Surrealism of the day, the thing to which the name is given.

But this last poem is Baronic, (I don't know what Baron's poems are like but I mean they have the modern incoherence.)

MYSELF: If Baron has anything to do with it, it was only the other day that I first met him.

SRI AUROBINDO: As this came soon after meeting Baron, I said as a joke that it must have been a real modern surrealist influence from him.

MYSELF: Well, regarding the poem, you seem to have understood the surrealist lines, not the others.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! the only lines I understood were those I marked as *not* entirely surrealist.

20. 2. 37

MYSELF: One thing is clear from C's letter, that he requires your protection. Well ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Difficult to protect such an erratic genius. However.

24. 2. 37

MYSELF: The result of Darshan was very queer: a

heavy inert sleep during the day and night. The waking hours passed in vacancy. I felt like a corpse without the soul. Even the thought of death passed across my mind. Something in the subconscious physical you have done, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Done what ? Raised up the subconscious in the form of a blank ? Had no such intention.

28. 2. 37

MYSELF: So Dr. Becharlal has gone ! But now perhaps the avalanche of the Dispensary work will roll down on me. Will you save and help me ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Help, I can. But save ? Well, an avalanche is an avalanche.

1. 3. 37

MYSELF: You find funny things in my poems ? Then, Sir, you have only to ask me to stop writing !

SRI AUROBINDO: But why do you object to fun ? Modern opinion is that poets ought to be funny (humorous) and that the objection to fun in poetry is a romantic superstition.

MYSELF: But then how is it that you give remarks as "very fine etc." ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it can be funnily fine or finely funny — can't it ?

MYSELF: If they are really funny, why should I spoil my valuable time writing them when I could sleep comfortably for those two hours ?

SRI AUROBINDO: For the joy of the world, of course. Funny, however, is used in the sense of "extraordinary". You can't deny that these things are extraordinary ?

MYSELF: Is that the reason why you don't give any explanations either ? Very well, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should I explain when you can

understand and explain yourself ? As Christ came to save sinners, not the righteous, so am I here to explain the inexplicable to the nonunderstanding.

2. 3. 37

MYSELF: In spite of your decrying my poems, Sir, there are plenty of beautiful conceptions, you must admit !

SRI AUROBINDO: Who decries it ? Some are funny — I beg pardon, extraordinary — but the beauty is all there.

6. 3. 37

MYSELF: Has a swan such beautiful eyes as can be quoted in poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nobody has ever rhapsodised over the swan's eyes. So better be cautious.

MYSELF: What's your opinion on today's poem, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite successful.

7. 3. 37

MYSELF: "Quite successful" only ? When will this be followed by a little more warmth and exhilaration, can you predict ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I can write, if you want: "Superlative ! Extraordinary ! Unimaginable ! Surprising ! Inexpressible ! Ineffable !" That ought to be warm and exhilarating —

10. 3. 37

MYSELF: L has a burning sensation in the mouth and throat.

SRI AUROBINDO: What cause ? She says from mouth to throat is carpeted with pepper and covered with thin

pomegranate grains and she suspects an eruption there. Also you have medicated her throat but under the tongue there is fire. Surrealist Poetry is not your monopoly — even your patients write it.

S informed me the other day that her spine had already begun breaking of itself into two.

11. 3. 37

MYSELF: You may congratulate yourself, Sir, on this invasion of surrealism ! But L is better. What have you done with the spine ? I saw her still going strong; result of your operation ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The spine was surrealistic — her going it strong is realistic.

MYSELF: P is much better — says bandage is now bondage !

SRI AUROBINDO: Seems much struck by Mother's force as per cure carbuncle — no gratitude to the doctor. Such is life !

MYSELF: What have you kept in store for us ? Not *sandesh* and *rasagolla* !¹ Will the sadhaks one by one tumble like X ? Then with whom will you enjoy your Supramental ? Night and day you are soaring, but don't look to see what fires your wings are throwing on our mortal frames !

SRI AUROBINDO: Romantic one ! I am not soaring and soaring — I am digging and digging. "Go to the ant thou sluggard" sort of affair.

My wings are throwing no fire. If anything happens to your mortal frames it is your own kerosene stoves that are responsible.

MYSELF: Why don't you give us some word of hope ? When will your Gentleman come down, if he will ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Bother your words of hope. I am concerned with getting things done, (if people will kindly

¹ Sweets.

allow it and not be making a row all the time) — not with words.

MYSELF: I am afraid I may share no better fate. Nevertheless all your promises will be fulfilled one day, for the Divine is eternal and so is the soul.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that ought to be enough.

You speak like a Daniel come to judgment. If you could only be calm like Daniel in the den of lions when these things happen, it would be all right.

12. 3. 37

MYSELF: Yes, Sir, such is life ! But in P's case I must give more credit to the Mother, for P's quick recovery. Good he believes in her Force, for you will have a disciple of the Warriorland of which you have none.

SRI AUROBINDO: Have several (not here, but there) but they are almost all neurasthenics !

MYSELF: Only he is a little too old and too much chaperoned by V !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good heavens ! V has got hold of him — Poor fellow !

MYSELF: Nishikanta has congestion of throat.

SRI AUROBINDO: Result of customs ? or of custom ?

MYSELF: All interest in life has gone. Poems are a bore, what prescription ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Shift to a centre within.

MYSELF: And X our chief centre has gone !

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose he will find plenty of radii in his new-old circumference.

MYSELF: Poor fellow speaks about my affection in his letter. What an illusion !

SRI AUROBINDO: Illusion ? This is poetry, sir.

13. 3. 37

MYSELF: Under P, you wrote: "...they are almost all

nervous thieves" ? Gracious !

SRI AUROBINDO: I didn't. I wrote "neurasthenics" — neurasthenic Warriors, sir !

MYSELF: And about Nishikanta — "Result of — or of custom ?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Result of Customs (British). Reference to their outing with Dilip.

MYSELF: What about my book, Sir ? Haven't decided where you will begin and where you will end ? or waiting for Sunday ?

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, if you write a Mahabharat, you can't expect the answer however scrappy to be finished in one or two nights among a mass of other work ? *Nous progressâmes*¹ — that's the state of things.

MYSELF: Still feeling bad — not for the loss of centre, but don't know exactly.

SRI AUROBINDO: No ? You don't feel অনাথ ?²

14. 3. 37

MYSELF: How did you hear of this remark অনাথ ? Somebody reported to you ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Any number of vivid reports of the great event — this detail among others.

MYSELF: D better; pain.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is it that he has a better pain ? or that the fact that he has a pain shows that he is better or that he is better, but still has pain ? An aphoristic style lends itself to many joyfully various interpretations.

MYSELF: I find that as a result of your Force A had one vomiting only.

SRI AUROBINDO: Evidently my Force is growing just as my handwriting is improving.

¹ We are progressing.

² One who has no shelter of any kind. Reference to a friend's first visit to Bengal after many years.

15. 3. 37

MYSELF: Obviously, evidently, undoubtedly, Sir, your Force is growing ! By the number of departees, one can see that !

SRI AUROBINDO: They are not departees yet. X gone on a spree — says he will one day come back. V sent as a missionary by the Mother — don't expect his mission will be very fruitful though. R went for her property — property and herself held up by her family, as we told her it would be etc. So no sufficient proof of force here. If they had all gone saying ফিরবনা, কখন ফিরবনা¹ as D threatened once, the proof would be conclusive.

16. 3. 37

MYSELF: You can't call X's poems sentimental this time, Sir, because they are addressed to the Divine !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, one can be sentimental with the Divine, if one particularly wants to !

MYSELF: He is having plenty of garlands, meetings, feastings, etc. Spree indeed ! Good enough for a change, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Change, certainly.

MYSELF: Are you writing a Mahabharat in reply, I wonder !

SRI AUROBINDO: I was.

Afternoon

MYSELF: Why did you say 'I was' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because I can make no time. Night after night I have to write letters, letters, letters, not to speak of other things.

MYSELF: Guru, I hope you won't 'ash' me for spoil-

¹ Shan't come back, never, never!

ing your afternoon 'spree', by this letter, will you ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Where is the spree in the afternoon ? Neither afternoon, evening, night, nor morning. Spree, indeed !

MYSELF: Laugh with X's sonnets and cry with the letter, if you can. Very touching ! If the কোমল ব্যবহার¹ of the people there had not been so good, it would have been splendid methinks.

SRI AUROBINDO: You recommend me a fit of hysteria ? No, sir. The sonnets are as usual, quite admirable. So, I dare say, was the কোমল ব্যবহার ।

By the way, his uncle has developed a carbuncle ! And X expects me to cure it ! A case for you, sir. After P.

17. 3. 37

MYSELF: Everything seems to be queer in this world, this yogic world included. When a fellow works hard at French, Medicine, trying to improve his department and himself, and thereby serve the Divine, it is bad. Too much concentration and meditation is worse. When one follows the rule "eat, drink and be merry" it is worst. I am coming to X's view that your Yoga will always be yours.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is where you miss the truth and he missed it also — he did not try to "improve himself", at any rate in any yogic way — he might try to aggrandise himself, but that is another matter. Self-aggrandisement does not save from collapse.

Well, I never heard that 'to eat, drink and be merry' was one of the paths of Yoga — unless Charvak's way is one of Yoga.

It is not my Yoga that is difficult to get the head or tail of — it is your and X's and others' views about Yoga that are weird and wonderful. If a fellow is brilliant in French and Sanskrit, you think he is a wonderful Yogi,

¹ Affectionate behaviour.

but then it is the people who are first in the Calcutta B.A. who must be the great Yogis. If one objects to spending all the energy in tea and talk, you say, "What queer Gurus these are and what queer ideas", as if sociability were the base of the Brahman, or on the contrary you think that everybody must shut himself up in a dark room, see nobody and go mad with want of food and sleep — and when we object to that, you say, "Who can understand this Yoga?" Have you never heard of Buddha's maxim "No excess in any direction" — or of Krishna's injunction "Don't eat too much or abstain from eating, don't drop sleep or sleep too much; don't torture the soul with violent tapasya — practise Yoga steadily without despondency. Don't abstain from work and be inactive, but don't think either that work will save you. Dedicate your work to the Divine, do it as a sacrifice, reach the point at which you feel that the works are not yours but done for you etc., etc. Through meditation, through dedicated works, through bhakti — all these together arrive at the divine consciousness and live in it"? Buddha and Krishna are not considered to be unintelligible big Absurdities, yet when we lay stress on the same thing, you all stare and say "What's this new unheard-of stuff?" It is the result I suppose of having modern-minded disciples who know all about everything and can judge better than any Guru, but to whom the very claims of Yoga are something queer and cold and strange. Kismet!

18. 3. 37

MYSELF: What, Sir, S has gone to deliver a 'message'?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nothing about message. Marriage, marriage — Two marriages, in fact. Not that he is going to marry 2 wives, but he is going to see the misfortune of two others consummated and gloat over it.

MYSELF: But why exactly did D tumble? — if not private. Self-aggrandisement only? Can't be.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not ? Never heard of megalomania ?

MYSELF: I heard that he was touchy regarding his wife and wife touchy about him ! My God, grazes the skin, almost, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Touchy means what ? And how does touchiness graze the skin ?

MYSELF: Now about tea and butter — All these were, it seems, generously granted by you to X.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not butter — it is tea and talk. They were granted by me as a concession to his nature, because by self-deprivation he would land himself in the seas of despair — not as a method of reaching the Brahman. He was trying to do what his nature would not allow. It was only if he got intense spiritual experience that he could give up tea and talk without wallowing in misery. Is it so difficult to understand a simple thing like that ? I should have thought it would be self-evident even to the dullest intelligence.

Because I allowed him to talk and objected to his making an ostentatious ascetic ass of himself does it follow that talk and tea were given as part of his Yoga ? If the Mother allowed butter or eggs to Y for his physical growth does it follow that butter and eggs are the bases of the Brahman ? If somebody has a stomach-ache and I send him to the Dispensary, does it follow that stomach-ache, the Dispensary, Nirod and allopathic drugs are the perfect way to spiritualisation ? Don't be an a—I mean a..... logician !

MYSELF: You perhaps had a hope that at least you would have some respite with no longer X's voluminous correspondence. Much mistaken, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: So long as I have not to write voluminous answers.

MYSELF: I am sure next August will be a great victorious occasion with swarms of élites of Calcutta at your feet. Happy at the prospect ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Horrifying idea ! Luckily the élites are not in the habit of swarming.

MYSELF: Anyway, please give him all the Force and protection possible and available so that the name of the Guru and disciple may resound from one end of India to another and all flock in crowds — trains, planes, to the door of the Invisible Guru !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good God !

MYSELF: Alas, where shall we be then ?

SRI AUROBINDO: And where shall we be ?

MYSELF: My poems are now getting less surrealistic and losing all charm of incomprehensibility, also the power of bold expressions, images, etc. Why ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Get them in another way, bold and original but not surrealistic, so that people instead of crying “Very fine but what the devil does he mean ?” will shout “Ah ha ! Wah ! wah !” in a chorus of approbation for your genius and personality much as X is getting in Calcutta. How do you like the prospect ?

20. 3. 37

MYSELF: Have you asked R’s opinion on this matter about the new patient ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Haven’t asked him. Afraid of a resonant explanation which would leave me gobbrified and flabbergasted but no wiser than before.

21. 3. 37

MYSELF: Well, what I meant by “suggestion” was that I shall be led to think it was I, my great personal effort that brought in the boldness, audacity, etc. in my poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you mean that you don’t want your poetry to improve because that would make you egoistic ? Very queer, sir.

MYSELF: What about the book, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What book ?

22. 3. 37

MYSELF: What book, you ask after 2 or 3 weeks ? My Mahabharat, Sir, or Ramayana, if you like !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good heavens ! who would have thought of that ?

MYSELF: How the devil did I mean that ? I certainly want to improve my poetry to its zenith, but it must not bring in the egoistic idea that I have done it by my own power, as your expressions "*You* have to do this", "*You* have to bring this etc., etc." may very likely feed the egoism. That's all, Sir ! Not clear ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sir, if I can't say you, must I write "that body" or "the phenomenon of an apparent Doctor-poet" ? Or there must be an impersonal commotion in the apparently personal part which might be pragmatically called "doing this" or "bringing this". That would discourage egoism; but it might discourage my writing also as well as stifle your poetic inspiration while you stare at the roundabouts.

MYSELF: Guru, Nishikanta has written this sister-song on you, at Dilipda's repeated requests. It seems to us a magnificent sister, surpassing the original, I think.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very finely sistered. In view of the subject I don't think I can say any more

MYSELF: Another letter from Chand — family matters and something about his Bank trouble ! What a fine thing to be an Avatar, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why ? You think an Avatar has to take in the Bank troubles of his Chands ? No fear !

23. 3. 37

MYSELF: I am now waiting only for the Mahabharat, and in the meantime sharpening my sword !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, don't brandish the sword in the void — that's all.

24. 3. 37

MYSELF: Will you take the trouble, Sir, to mark the portions of your letters that I can show J ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, sir, I can't do that. You forget that I will have to try to read my own hieroglyphs. I have no time for such an exercise — I leave it to others.

26. 3. 37

MYSELF: At 10.30 p.m. I went to bed. When I was in half sleep, I felt as if a great pressure were being exerted on me; the whole body became hot and was perspiring.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sir, the Presence not finding an entrance into your waking mind easy, tried to take advantage of half sleep to do it. (Half sleep is always a favourable condition for these things.) But your body consciousness not being familiar with such spiritual penetrations, got into a stew — and as a stew is accompanied by heat and steam, so your body got hot and perspired.

MYSELF: What sort of an affair is this ? Trying to cut my throat or burst my head, Sir ? Did I do anything wrong by trying to relax ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Throat not in the picture. Tried to steal a march into your head.

It is better to relax than to burst.

29. 3. 37

SRI AUROBINDO: Chand writes about your letter "abortioning" him with regard to his falsehood.... (I suppose it is some other word but it reads like "abortioning".)

MYSELF: S has some intense itching — the whole body is swollen and red.

SRI AUROBINDO: But what nature of eruption? She has sent a howl — can't sleep, etc.

MYSELF: B complains of more pain!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he has also sent an epistolary howl.

30. 3. 37

MYSELF: The trouble is that people expect their ailments to disappear like a miracle! Doctors are not Gods and Gods are not always miraculous!

SRI AUROBINDO: Miracles can be done, but there is no reason why they should be all instantaneous, whether from Gods or doctors.

MYSELF: Suddenly at 5 p.m. B's pain vanished. So I justify his epistle, Sir! His thundering scowl burst your ear!

SRI AUROBINDO: It wasn't a scowl, even a thundering surrealist one — it was a tympanum-piercing howl — so one had to do something.

MYSELF: By the way, I want to know, just as a piece of information, what the Mother is going to do about the awful smell around Belle Vue.

SRI AUROBINDO: Smell was that of Godard's prawns.¹ The Municipality has just thundered at him and given notice to the prawns to quit. I am told that there is a sensible odorous amelioration since the last two days.

31. 3. 37

MYSELF: What do you say, Sir, about this poem? Somewhat forced and artificial, no rhythm.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid so. Rather dream-dream-dreamy-brang-clangy.

¹ Reference to a factory manufacturing tinned prawns.

MYSELF: I have marked in two places, please see if they jar upon your ears.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid they do.

1. 4. 37

MYSELF: Did you get a headache whenever you gave up tea ? or was there no need to give it up at all ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, of course. Whenever you stop it suddenly, gives headache in revenge.

MYSELF: Today I stopped the habit of morning tea. The result: headache since 11 a.m. Or is it the Force trying to break my precious head ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it is the tea habit, furious at being given up.

2. 4. 37

MYSELF: My concentration, peace and bliss are all gone ! At this moment I am dull, dull like clay ! Suddenly to drop without doing anything wrong — why such a setback ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Everybody drops. I have dropped myself thousands of times during the sadhana. What rose-leaf princess sadhaks you all are !

MYSELF: Is it not that we have to work very hard at Yoga in this Ashram and it takes very long to get to our goal ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Allow me to point out that here there are any number of people who have had experiences which could be highly prized outside. There are even one or two who have had the Brahman realisation in a single year. But it is the fashion here to shout and despair and say we have got nothing and nobody can get anything in this Yoga. I believe the pretensions of the Pondicherry sadhaks to have an easy and jolly canter to the goal or else think themselves baffled martyrs would be stared at

with surprise in any other Ashram.

3. 4. 37

MYSELF: I could not write poetry for two days. Along with the heavy work, a disgust for poetry has seized me, just when things were coming up. Misfortunes are usual with me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! Such “misfortunes” are usual with everybody including myself.

4. 4. 37

MYSELF: For heaven’s sake don’t include yourself in the misfortunes.

SRI AUROBINDO: But I never said that I was one of the misfortunes.

MYSELF: I am not Brahma to take them as part of the Lila !

SRI AUROBINDO: I thought everybody was Brahma, सर्वमिदम् ब्रह्म ।¹ Anyway you are trying to do Yoga, so the sooner you adopt the lila attitude the better. Moreover plenty of people undergo these misfortunes without lamentations — take them as the ordinary stuff of life.

MYSELF: No poetry today either ! Hellish !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, you can try to straddle back into heaven tomorrow.

MYSELF: In V’s case I would have tried anti-serum and astringents, opium, etc. And I think most of the doctors would have done that.

SRI AUROBINDO: Try everything one after the other and together and see if any hits — that seems to be the method.

All this is Brahman.

6. 4. 37

MYSELF: I have scratched the whole poem out of existence ! And yet when I completed it, I was so happy thinking it was something great ! Fool !

SRI AUROBINDO: Every poet is such a fool. His work is done in an exalting excitement of the vital mind — judgment and criticism can only come when he has cooled down.

MYSELF: Well, Sir, any good the other poem, or goes to the same basket ?

SRI AUROBINDO: This one is very fine. No W. P. B., please.

MYSELF: I can't get the current back. Even the taste has disappeared. On the contrary a fear has grown, lest my poems may be good for nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense ! No poet can always write well — If even Homer nods, Nirod can often doze — that is no reason for getting morally bilious.

MYSELF: Once I asked you to give some advice as regards the treatment of a patient, you replied: "...I have no medico in me, not even a latent medico."

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course not. If it were there, I would develop that and run the Dispensary myself. What would be the need of a Nirod or Becharlal or Ram-chandra ?

MYSELF: Then the other day regarding K's baby, you wrote that the Mother has no intuition for infants.

SRI AUROBINDO: No intuition for stuffing infants with heterogenous medicines.

MYSELF: Well, then if you have no latent medico and Mother has no intuition for infants, can you tell me how by the force of devotion, faith, surrender, etc. is one going to get guidance from you ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What logic ! Because Mother and myself are not engineers, therefore Chandulal can't deve-

lop the right intuition in engineering? or because neither I nor Mother are experts in Gujarati prosody, therefore Pujalal can't develop the inspiration for his poems?

MYSELF: If the Divine can't guide me externally which is much easier, how can he guide internally, and if he has no medico wherefrom will the medico come to him?

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh Lord! what a question! To guide internally is a million times easier than to guide externally. Let us suppose I want General Miaja to beat Franco's fellows back at Guadalaguasu (please pronounce properly), I put the right force on him and he wakes up and, with his military knowledge and capacity, does the right thing and it is done. But if I, having no latent or patent military genius or knowledge in me, write to him saying "Do this, do that", he won't do it and I would not be able to do it either. It is operations of two quite different spheres of consciousness. You absolutely refuse to make the necessary distinction between the two fields and their processes and then you jumble the two together and call it logic.

MYSELF: If the medico can be revealed from within, why could it not be revealed from without and tell me to give anti-dys. serum to K's baby, which I hear, has been administered and found to be effective?

SRI AUROBINDO: Damn it, man! Intuition and revelation are inner things — they don't belong to the outer mind.

MYSELF: If you or the Mother can't guide me concretely, how will the guidance come later on, I wonder.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you imagine that I tell you inwardly or outwardly what expressions to use in your Bengali poems when you are writing? Still you write from an inspiration which I have set going.

MYSELF: Can you satisfy my logical brain box, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your logical brain box, sir, is such a rule-of-thumb, Dr. Johnsonian sort of affair that it is quite impossible to satisfy. If ever you succeed in empty-

ing the brain box of its miscellaneous contents and being mentally silent then you will discover how these things are done.

MYSELF: I want, to carry on the medical work well, the channel to open. Please don't say that I cogitate, hesitate, etc. It is precisely that that I want to avoid. Shall I adopt the surrealist method i.e. to keep for a moment very quiet and whatever strikes first, go ahead with it; only be careful in case of poisons !

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a vegetable called "bubble and squeak". That describes the two methods you propose. "Bubble" is to go on tossing symptoms about in the head and trying to discover what they point to — that is your method. "Squeak" is to dart at a conclusion (supported by a quotation) and ram some inappropriate medicine down the patient's throat — that's X's method. But the proper method is neither to bubble nor to squeak.

MYSELF: You remember once I told you of this surrealist method and you cried — Good Lord ! ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I did and I repeat it. I don't want this Ashram transferred to the next world by your powerful agency.

MYSELF: But Mother once asked me to try this method i.e. instead of analysing the various possibilities and then diagnosing by elimination etc., just keep quiet and go at it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, so that's how the Mother's statements are understood ! A free permit for anything and everything calling itself an intuition to go crashing into the field of action ! Go at it, indeed ! Poor it !

7. 4. 37

MYSELF: Guru, Chand's letter ! Do you notice what he says about outside disciples and Dilip's going ? Any truth ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't make out anything from the fellow's Bengali flourishes. What does he say? I can only make out that Benoy has told to him what Biswanath told to Benoy about what Mother told to Biswanath; but what it was I can't make out — only that for that reason Dilip and others were allowed to flit. Kindly enlighten.

10. 4. 37

MYSELF: I wonder why you flared up at the idea of surrealist method. By 'go at it' I didn't obviously mean sending your Ashram to the next world! No, not at all. I meant only this: say a case comes with pain in the stomach. I simply keep silent, suddenly comes to me the suggestion — gastritis.

SRI AUROBINDO: I did not flare up. I was cold with horror. Doctors don't mean it when they do that kind of thing. It is not deliberate murder with them, but involuntary or, shall we say, experimental homicide.

MYSELF: Do the successful doctors get it by plenty of experiences, treating, curing, killing, etc.?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, there are some who after killing a few hundreds, learn to kill only a few. But that is not intuition; that is simply learning from experience.

MYSELF: The funniest thing of all is that if the Divine wills why can't it be revealed to him, an effective drug in a case, medico or no medico?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why the devil should He will like that in all cases?

12. 4. 37

MYSELF: Besides those whom you have vetoed for vaccination, I'm afraid many others have to be done so. I had to exclude S, M, J and B, for they had pox before.

SRI AUROBINDO: Those who have had pox once are not vaccinated? That's all right.

13. 4. 37

MYSELF: Why, Sir, you didn't know that small pox fellows are not required to be vaccinated ? A book says one attack generally protects for life, but second attacks are not very uncommon and the protection tends to wear off in time. My theory smashed ? Well, exception proves the rule, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, there are people who say that small pox attack immunises for only a few years. But if it is as you say then there are others, I suppose. There is Amani among the servants for instance who nearly died of small pox. I myself had a slight attack in Baroda after I came from England — so you needn't try to come up and vaccinate me.

MYSELF: I gather that French regulation requires vaccination every year.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not every week ?

MYSELF: Why the devil am I having a headache these last two days ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Supramental trying to find a place in your head ?

15. 4. 37

MYSELF: Well, don't discuss, if you don't like these medical things, but please enlighten us with your supramental Light as we are rather hidebound in our glorious Science.

SRI AUROBINDO: No time for showing the glorious Science its errors. Too busy trying to get the supramental Light down to waste time on that. Afterwards, sir, afterwards.

MYSELF: Sada & Co. refuse the vaccination point blank ! Till now none has succeeded in doing them, they say ! Well ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing to be said, unless you tell them to go and be d—d in their own way!

MYSELF: After reading so many Bengali poems and Dilipda's learned lessons on metre, you ought not to say that you are not an expert in Bengali metre, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Read them? Flip-flopped through them, you mean—how could all that strenuous technicality remain in the head?

MYSELF: Look at this Bengali sonnet. How is it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very fine indeed except for the concluding couplet which might be called a flat drop! What the deuce sir? What kind of coupletitis is this illness of yours? *anaemia finalis*.

MYSELF: Another letter from C, saying that your chiding had wonderful effect, Sir. Lots of worries gone! So it is not my *abortioning*, Sir! [vide 29. 3. 37] Yours entirely. I am not used to these things, not yet, at least! It was, by the way, *chastising*. Gracious, chastising is miles away from abortioning!

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't be, can't be! You must have misread it. I stick to the abortion.

16. 4. 37

MYSELF: What is it, Sir, 'Sada & Co. *to be dead? dead!*'

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, not dead, but damned! damned! damned!

MYSELF: Very glad to hear, Sir, that you are 'too busy'. Only we have been hearing that so often and so long since, that by now the Supramental or any Light should have tumbled down!

SRI AUROBINDO: It isn't so easy to make it tumble.

MYSELF: But jokes apart, I hear from reliable authority that the Supramental Descent is very near. Is it true, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am very glad to hear it on reliable authority. It is a *great* relief.

MYSELF: What is this medical word, Sir ? 'What kind of *coupletitis*' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that's it — like neuritis, laryngitis, etc. so *coupletitis*, illness of the couplet.

17. 4. 37

MYSELF: When we were discussing about the Force and the Spanish General Miaja, you said: 'Let us suppose... I put the *right* force on him....' Why did you say 'right' ? Is there also a wrong Force ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't remember what exactly I wrote — can't say very well. But of course there can be a wrong Force. There are Asuric Forces, rajasic Forces, all sorts of Forces. Apart from that one can use a mental or vital Force which may not be the right thing. Or one may use the Force in such a way that it does not succeed or does not hit the General on the head or is not commensurate with the opposing Forces. (Opposing Forces need not be Asuric, they may be quite gentlemanly Forces thinking they are in the right. Or two Divine Forces might knock at each other for the fun of the thing. Infinite possibilities, sir, in the play of Forces.)

MYSELF: By the way, it seems your Supramental is a magnificent something wide by gulfs and seas from all other Powers and Forces ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, otherwise I wouldn't be after it.

MYSELF: You won't say anything about the Supramental till it descends. It is this great mystery about it that makes us pin all our faith on it and the word Supermind goes from mouth to mouth. Ah, if we could have faint glimpses of it !

SRI AUROBINDO: Not much utility in this mouth to mouth business. If people set themselves seriously to the task of psychic or spiritual opening or development, it would be much more useful — even for the coming of

the Supramental. If I tried to explain about the Supramental, it would be all UP with the Supramental. The rest of the lives of the sadhaks would be spent in discussing the Supramental and how near Nirod or Nishikanta or Anilbaran was to the Supramental and whether this was supramental or that was supramental or whether it was supramental to drink tea or not etc., etc., and there would be no more chance of any sadhana.

MYSELF: In my yesterday's Bengali poem you asked me: 'What's this word?' Well, I meant it to be ত্রস্ত¹ but wrote instead ত্রস্ত।² A ॥ sat on top, you could have cut it off.

SRI AUROBINDO: Thought it ought to go off, but it snapped its fingers and said it was too big and clear and positive to be treated in that way.

MYSELF: S has hard red swelling about the left elbow joint; no cause.

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, in this world there is nothing without a cause — unless you hold the ultramodern view that causation does not exist.

18. 4. 37

MYSELF: No luck about Intuition?

SRI AUROBINDO: None! Too thorny a subject to tackle without leisure and space.

19. 4. 37

SRI AUROBINDO: By the way S must be added to the list of vaccination impossibles. R asks me to warn you and Amal that if you vaccinate, you will get back your old friends the boils and Amal his old companion the stye. I pass on the warning to you without further piling

¹ *Trasta*.

² *Strasta*.

up the agony. A very nasty affair this vaccination, in any case.

MYSELF: বসন্ত বনে হরিণীয়ে হেরি পাগল হই।¹

SRI AUROBINDO: Not really ? ! !

20. 4. 37

MYSELF: Why ask 'not really' ? You told us that sincerity is not indispensable in poetry, neither true facts. You should have appreciated the beautiful figure of expression in that line.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it was not a question of reality, but of verisimilitude. And then the vision of you gone mad over a deer was a little upsetting.

MYSELF: I have changed the line into বসন্ত বনে মৌমাছিসম অধীর হই।²

SRI AUROBINDO: Umph ! This is less upsetting.

MYSELF: I quite agree with you, Sir, about the beastly nastiness of vaccination, though in which way, we may disagree.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is beastly and nasty in all ways, so there is no room for disagreement.

MYSELF: S has been put out of the ring of vaccination and so is Amal.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then add I and M to the Vaccination Untouchables.

21. 4. 37

MYSELF: Y seems to have gone for health.

SRI AUROBINDO: Y went, not only for health, but to see his dear Guru who is preparing to shuffle off the mortal coil and for other motives of that kind. Quite natural, isn't it ?

¹ This line occurred in a poem of mine. It means one going mad seeing a doe in the forest in spring.

² Get excited like bees.

As for X, he has been going some dozen or dozen and a half times, only pulled back with great difficulty. Wants immediate siddhi in perfect surrender, absolute faith, unshakable peace. If all that is going to take time, can't do the Yoga. Feels himself unfit. Not being allowed to reach the Paratpara Brahman at once, had better rush out into the world and dissipate himself into the Nihil. Besides got upset by every trifle and, as soon as upset, lost faith in the Mother — and without faith no Yoga possible. Reasoning, sir, reasoning — the mighty intellect in its full stupidity. Understand now ?

MYSELF: When somebody leaves the Ashram, I feel a kick, a shock, a heartquake.

SRI AUROBINDO: May I ask why ? People have been leaving the Ashram since it began, not only now. Say 30 or 40 people have gone, 130 or 140 others have come. The big Maharathis, X, Y, Z, departed from this too damnable Ashram where great men are not allowed to do as they like. The damnable Ashram survives and grows. A and B and C fail in their yoga — but the yoga proceeds on its way, advances, develops. Why then kick, shock and heartquake ?

MYSELF: I hold the view that the Supramental is descending concentratedly and that those who resist, who are between two fires, have either to quit or to submit.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not so strongly or concentratedly as it ought, but better than before.

Even if it were so, that is their own business. The Divine is driving nobody out except in rare cases where their staying would be a calamity to the Ashram; if they cannot bear the pressure and rush away, listening to the "go away, go away" push and suggestions of the Hostile can it be said then that it was the Divine who drove them away and the push and suggestion of the Hostile is that of the Divine ? A singular logic ! The "go, go" push and suggestion have been successfully there ever since the Ashram started and even before when there was

no Ashram. How does that square with your theory that it is due to the concentrated descent of the Force ?

MYSELF: If such things happen owing to your bringing down the Supramental Light, I am afraid you will have to stop the business or let whosoever drops be hanged.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should I stop the business — that is to say postpone the possibility for another millennium because A or B gets shaky or many others look homeward ? Will that postponement change the lower nature or get rid of the Asuras ?

22. 4. 37

MYSELF: By the way, you did not understand me. I didn't mean that you damned my poems but my metres or rather my innovations in metres.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh that ! Of course. Your irregulars were very rough with the poor English language.

MYSELF: Can you not, or rather isn't it high time that you opened up the medical channel in me, Sir ? I feel ashamed that being a doctor I can't cure cases !

SRI AUROBINDO: Medical channel ? Rather rocky perhaps and sanded — but if poetry could open, why not medicine ?

23. 4. 37

MYSELF: Medical channel rather 'vicky' ? 'Vichy' ? and — what ? It means anyhow the thing is not easy, but why not ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rocky, sir, rocky — sanded — silted up with sand from both sides. No place for the current. Have to blast rocks, dig out channel, embank.

MYSELF: How is this sestet, Guru ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very pleasing. (Going to use new adjectives occasionally.)

MYSELF: And this poem, how is it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very pleasing also.

MYSELF: I dreamt last night that you said it was an exceedingly beautiful poem. Will it be fulfilled ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have already said it — so it would be nothing new.

24. 4. 37

MYSELF: Some other new adjectives ? Oh Lord, no ! Have had enough, your 'pleasing' pleases me not !

SRI AUROBINDO: Dear me, dear me ! I was tired of writing fine and beautiful (you forbid "good") and thought I was very clever in getting a variation. You are hard to please ! What do you say to "nice" ? "exhilarating" ? "*épatant*", "*joli, très joli*", "*surprenant, mon cher*" ? Let's have some variety, sir.

MYSELF: Romen hooks on and Nirod cooks on ? No, Sir, I too let it tumble now !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, this has tumbled very well.

26. 4. 37

MYSELF: A poem, Sir. What adjectives ? New or old ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very pleasing again.

27. 4. 37

MYSELF: What about this poem ? Pleasing or pleasant ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both at once and very !

28. 4. 37

MYSELF: By the way, am I also going to the Amalian relapse ? These blessed poems don't seem to catch.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see any relapse. Your Matra-

brittas¹ are always excellent, sonnets up to the mark. Perhaps you miss the glories of surrealism — the magnificent images and smiting lines ? Anyhow you have gained in harmony and finish. Perhaps when you magnify and smite again it will be in a more perfect way.

MYSELF: A spree will improve matters ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Spree, sir, spree ! what do you mean ?

MYSELF: Tomorrow's list of people for vaccination: Krishnayya, Premanand, Nishikanta, etc....

SRI AUROBINDO: Krishnayya ? not an unhealthy subject ? won't bite ? Besides D. R. badly off for workers. Leave it to you, sir.

Amrita was to have offered himself as a victim on the altar of vaccination, but he has been kindly bitten by the dog of the Privy Councillor, so although there is no hydrophobic danger, it is better for him to cure before being bitten by the vaccinator.

MYSELF: K has swelling of left ankle (old injury).

SRI AUROBINDO: Why revived ? She is talking of bone injury etc.

MYSELF: P's operation tomorrow at 9.30 a.m. Please circulate some Force !

SRI AUROBINDO: P in order to facilitate matters for tomorrow, has started.... What cheer brothers !

29. 4. 37

MYSELF: 'What cheer brothers !' or 'bothers !' ? Never heard of such a phrase, Sir ! Most 21st century, I am sure. Even Wodehouse hasn't that !

SRI AUROBINDO: It is both. You don't know the story of Pavitra and Khitish and the bother ? Pavitra who had just come here with a rather French pronunciation of English said to K "I am a brother to you all" and Khitish cried out "Oh, no, no !" Pavitra insisted but Khitish still cried out with pain and politeness in his voice "Oh,

¹ Metrical rhythm.

no, no !” It turned out K had heard all through “I am a bother to you all !” So brothers are bothers and bothers are constant brothers to us insisting on inhabiting the Ashram — or at least visiting it, like the vaccination, P’s needle, etc.

MYSELF: ‘Why revived ?’ regarding K’s swelling ? God knows ! If I know, it is her dancing gait that has brought it by some twist there. Bone injury indeed !

SRI AUROBINDO: She has been weeping and saying nobody cares for her because you said it was nothing and I didn’t jump to her bone suggestion. So Mother gave her Siju to embalm her wounded feelings.

MYSELF: A few D. R. workers remain to be vaccinated.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not very eager to have them bitten — what will become of D. R. kitchen if they go over ? You don’t want to eat ?

MYSELF: Here is an English poem written between dozes !

SRI AUROBINDO: Compliments ! you have reached the summit with one bound ! Magnificent.

30. 4. 37

MYSELF: Thank you Sir, for the compliments ! I have reached the summit but next time you will see me in the abyss ! If one could remain there !

SRI AUROBINDO: The abyss can also produce poetry. In the abyss ! Why ?

MYSELF: I told you that D. R. and B. S. workers have almost all been vaccinated. Sadhaks 30 done, and no more forthcoming. So shall we close the show here ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose it can be closed.

2. 5. 37

MYSELF: I am feeling feverish, cold in the head, bad

headache. Due to sea bath and diving? What a pity!

SRI AUROBINDO: Pains of pleasure, I suppose.

4. 5. 37

MYSELF: Which is better: 'To a motionless abode intense hushed seas' or 'of deep hushed seas'?

SRI AUROBINDO: My God, sir, the line with its tangle of sh and s sounds would be unpronounceable like Toru Dutt's "Sea-shells she sells."

MYSELF: Guru, from this quatrain you will see that I have tried a hell of a lot to improve or rewrite it and yet not successful!

"Plunge there like pearls in timeless trance-repose;
Culled from spring-garden of firecoated seeds,
The nectar-rays of heaven's golden Rose
Shower on the calm expanse-like pollen beads."

SRI AUROBINDO: So I see, but your plunging quatrain plunges and splashes a lot without arriving anywhere near coherence.... I think between us — putting aside all false modesty — we have made a rather splendacious super-realist poem out of your surrealist affair.

8. 5. 37

MYSELF: *Anémie cérébrale*, you said about A? Good God, no! It is anaemia hepaticus.

SRI AUROBINDO: [changing *hepaticus* to *hepatica*]: Who is this hermaphrodite?

MYSELF: But is blood examination necessary? For what? Malaria or simple blood-count?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know — it is to satisfy A. He thinks he has a colonisation of colon bacilli — spreading where they ought not to be (like certain nations) or else liver poisoning or kidney poisoning — he feels in the morning as if he had been poisoned in his sleep. It is to decide between these scientific theories that so many

examinations were suggested....

9. 5. 37

MYSELF: Guru, my Bengali poem was not even pleasing this time ? Alas ! or did you forget it in the sweep of the cataract that came down in your pen ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite forgot all about him ! Anyhow not very successful — pretty but wobbly — like someone unsure of his legs but just drunk enough to be sentimental.

MYSELF: Amal says that in my poem the term ‘concentrated blood’ is very fine but how can it be lost in the night ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Concentrated blood something like condensed milk. It’s the blood that’s lost or the night ?

Sorry but I had to rewrite the last lines. As they stand they are simply magnificent nonsense.

10. 5. 37

MYSELF: In yesterday’s poem, you seem to have transformed the sun into a majesty of Night !

SRI AUROBINDO: No, its condensed milk — oh, I mean, blood.

MYSELF:

“Much that we hold dear breaks like a sheet of
glass
Vain shadows in the world fair decked with dew;
When a blast of wind sweeps over the — view
All exhibits fall into the ground in a mass.”

Amal said he didn’t like especially ‘decked with dew’ business.

SRI AUROBINDO: Especially the exhibits — good Lord !
[Sri Aurobindo filled the blank in the 3rd line with the word *damned*.]

MYSELF:

“We lose, yet gain our spirit’s freedom bold
By cruel sacrifice of earthly ties;
Even if life bleeds, it shall have the mould
Of the Supreme’s fire touch and heavenward rise.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Look here, sir, — I bar, damn and completely reject and repudiate your “freedom bold”. This kind of inversion is cheap bric-à-brac — and to be resolutely avoided. Kindly kick it out. Also what’s your scanning of the third line “Even/if it/bleeds life/shall have/the mould” — won’t do at all. Kindly alter these *gaffes*.

11. 5. 37

MYSELF:

“Break that chain, find in the soul’s lonely sign
A fountain of volcanic deluge-fire,
The rock-embedded source, the Spirit-mine,
The immortal wine of sovereign Desire.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, this is a surrealistic tangle. You find a fountain of volcanic fire in a sign and that fountain is the source of a mine (rather difficult for the miners to get at through the volcanic fire) and also in that source is a wine-cellar, — perhaps in the rocks which embed the source, but all the same a strange place to choose. Perhaps for the miners to drink.

12. 5. 37

MYSELF: And good God, Sir, you have made the Spirit a swine !

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, I haven’t, though the spirit often becomes a swine. But you have made the spirit-mine into the spirit’s mine which is a deterioration.

14. 5. 37

MYSELF: I am having blessed fever since the morning; aching all over the limbs; a damn business it is, Sir! Could not do any work. Read a detective story as treatment. Taking one Pulv. Glys. Co.

SRI AUROBINDO: Detective story as treatment and Pulv. Glys. and Company as amusement? Right!

15. 5. 37

MYSELF: A enquired if more purgative was advisable. Dr. B recommends a dose of castor oil or enema, to clear out the bowel.

SRI AUROBINDO: More purgatives? after the triumph of the soda sulph and A's own pathetic question?

MYSELF:

“...captives like a snake's fire-entrancing eye
In the dreary meshes of a bondage-will.”

Will glistening and poisoned coils do?

SRI AUROBINDO: Doesn't improve the natural history. A snake's eye doesn't captive in coils.

16. 5. 37

MYSELF: About Rajani's blood report. I said that urine and blood are connected as রজনী¹ to দিবস,¹ or blood circulating through the kidney contributes to the formation or excretion of urine. When blood sugar rises beyond the normal it is excreted....

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, you haven't told me if there is any meaning in the ++ 2.5 except that it corresponds to the blood urine like রজনী পালিত² to Diwakar....

¹ Night and day. Pun on the name Rajani meaning night.

² Rajani Palit and Diwakar are proper names, but Sri Aurobindo also puns on them, for Diwakar means Sun that gives light to the day.

MYSELF: Is it all right: 'My spirit flies in skies' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: flies in skies ! What a satisfying internal rhyme !

17. 5. 37

MYSELF: In Rajani's report, you seem to make ++ separate from 2.5%. It is not so.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. I simply wanted to know exactly what 2.5 indicated, if anything.

MYSELF: We examine chemically first a sample of urine, i.e. by chemical re-agents, which is called qualitative test. You ought to know that from your English Public School chemistry, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Never learned a word of Chemistry or any damned science in my school. My school, sir, was too aristocratic for such plebian things.

MYSELF: Good Lord, the fellow is harbouring all sorts of organisms ! Of course, it is in a way expected, for diabetes diminishes resistance to infection. But, he is, I gather, coming to supramental treatment soon ! Everything clear now ? He doesn't seem to be taking Insulin treatment.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Civil Surgeon Fisher who fished him in the hospital, talked vaguely of a possibility of Insulin in the future if the examination proved the necessity, but the new Civil Surgeon Kapur who is making him caper out of hospital positively forbids the use of Insulin. So !

MYSELF: You said to write overhead poetry in a rush, one must be very, very — and left the sentence unfinished. Is it 'very, very Sri Aurobindo-like' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: But I am not aware that I write overhead poetry with a rush.

MYSELF: It is very strange your school had no chemistry.

SRI AUROBINDO: It may have had in a corner, but I had nothing to do with such stuff.

MYSELF: But for I. C. S. you had no science?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly not. In I. C. S. you can choose your own subjects.

MYSELF: Perhaps these new-fangled things hadn't come out then?

SRI AUROBINDO: They were new-fangled and not yet respectable.

MYSELF: Guru, you won't find anything new or interesting in this poem. Is it worth the trouble of corrections?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is one of the best English poems you have written; slight alterations are all that is necessary.

MYSELF: I am afraid my source of English poetry is exhausted before it has begun. The Guru is supposed to take up the *śiṣya's*¹ troubles!

SRI AUROBINDO: It seems to me to be rather J's trouble. She writes fine epic verse and says she is unable to do anything worthwhile—you write a fine sonnet and decide that your inspiration is exhausted. Queer.

MYSELF: Anyway, please bring back to me that buoyance, faith and joy, force and confidence. Otherwise finished! Your working is extremely fine and diplomatic, I must say. Gave me an exceedingly fine poem to begin with and cheered me up. Then—"go on my dear fellow—spading, efforting, labouring and perspiring. Oh it will come, it will come!"

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not my working, but your moods that are queer. You get something no reasonable being

¹ Disciple.

would expect under the ordinary laws of Nature and then you fancy you haven't got it and wail because everything is not absolutely, continuously, faultlessly, increasingly, illimitably miraculous through and through and always and for ever. In no sadhana that I know of does absolute sustained perfection in everything come with a rush and stay celestially perfect for ever more. If it were so there would be no need for sadhana — one would only have to gaze at heaven a little and grow wings and fly into the spheres a triumphant godhead.

MYSELF: Your O. P., Sir, not a snatch of it has ever come into Bengali poetry — our Bengali poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't say. I can recognise the thing well enough in English, because I know the symptoms of the O. P. abnormally there. In Bengali it is more difficult for me to detect. I suppose I must try to train my ear for that.

19. 5. 37

MYSELF: I am greatly surprised to hear that you have to train your ear to judge the source of Bengali poetry. Is it a question of the ear?

SRI AUROBINDO: Great Scott, man! Poetry and *no* question of the ear?

MYSELF:

“Tapering fingers of an infinite Force
Mould life's grey mire to a bright rhythm of sun:
Through a gold network of vessels lustre-spun
Its luminous blood into earth's darkness pours.”

SRI AUROBINDO: ...What are these clumsy vessels doing there, either? Into whose kitchen have you trespassed? Cooking blood? But why not then “earth's cauldron”?

Anyhow kick the vessels out. A gold (something) network lustre-spun would sound fine, but I don't know what something to put as I have not the least idea what

you are after. Cryptic, by God !

MYSELF: These two lines I have scanned thus:

“Betwixt/the sha/dow and/reflec/tion of light
Attracts/me no/more, their/incons/tancy.”

SRI AUROBINDO: God ! what a horror of an anapaest and what a rhythm !

20. 5. 37

MYSELF: Oh yes, you didn't understand my “vessels” ? Because you forgot, Sir, that I am a medical poet. Vessels are not for cooking only — there are also blood vessels; and you should have made it out as blood was also there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Let me point out to you that vessels of gold can only mean pots and things, not blood vessels. If you say “golden vessels” it might be otherwise, provided you put a footnote N.B: physiological metaphor. For non-medical poetry veins would be better and not puzzle the layman.

MYSELF: Why the devil does A write all these things to you ? Are you prescribing or are we ? and what the devil is the use of his knowing the medicines and doses, pray ? He could have asked me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, what about the free Englishman's right to grumble ? This is not London and there is no “Times” to write to, so he writes a letter to me, instead of to the “Times”.

MYSELF: Surely there is a twist somewhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is always a twist, sir, always.

MYSELF: Anyway, I won't fume nor tear my hair.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't. Losing one's hair is always a useless operation. Keep your hair on.

MYSELF: Only tell him, please, that he ought to let us know instead of sending a boy with an empty bottle, if he doesn't want to present his honourship himself, or shall I tell him myself ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Dear sir, tell him yourself, tell him yourself. I will pat you on the back in silence from a safe distance.

MYSELF: How is today's poem, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Miraculously successful, sir, except for one ornithological detail.

22. 5. 37

MYSELF: There are plenty of alternatives and questions in this poem; I hope they don't annoy you.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it doesn't annoy but sir, you have written a magnificent poem without knowing it and that is absurd. The foam-washed shore on the edge of time is splendid, twilight's starry heart-beat is splendid; lines 7, 8, 9, 12 are O.K. while the couplet is a miracle. If these are not O. P., they ought to be. Quite awfully fine. *Gaudeamus igitur*.¹

23. 5. 37

MYSELF: Why did you call it absurd, Sir, writing a poem without knowing ? If I knew I would have been glad, but there is a greater pleasure in surprises, isn't there ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Surprise or what ? Surprise of not knowing till somebody tells you ?

MYSELF: O.K. in English is something like all right, quite fit, etc. no ?

SRI AUROBINDO: In American English.

MYSELF: In yesterday's letter, Amal says it is a Latin phrase — *Gaudumus igitur*.

SRI AUROBINDO: What's that — that's not Latin ! There is no such word as *Gaudumus*. I wrote *gaudeamus*.

¹ Let us therefore rejoice.

24. 5. 37

MYSELF: This is how I have scanned these lines:

“Of immor/tality shines/like a glit/tering sound
Reach not/that In/fini/ty's o/cean-edge.”

SRI AUROBINDO: How the devil can any stress go on “mor” and “li” of Immortality. It is like making an elephant balance on two walking sticks. The stress is “im-mor-tality”, it can't be pronounced “immortality”. The same with “Infini-ty”, you can't pronounce it as if it were “Infinitty” to rhyme with “eety” and “ditty”.

MYSELF: About yesterday's poem, this remark will do: Quite awfully fine. A magnificent poem.

SRI AUROBINDO [putting brackets round ‘Quite awfully fine’]: This is too jocular a form for a solemn “remark”. The rest by itself sounds as if you had written the Iliad. Better say more modestly “An extremely fine poem”.

25. 5. 37

MYSELF: You seem to have had no time yesterday to read my poem. Golden silence of indifference?

SRI AUROBINDO: All that was really there last night? How astonishing! I didn't see it. However I have answered now.

MYSELF:

“...She comes crossing the heights of mid-night
glow,
With the swift wings of a cataractous flow.”

SRI AUROBINDO: You can't have wings of a flow (except surrealistically, when you can have anything). “Cataractous flow” is impossible.

It could have been a very fine poem, but you have peppered anapaests and dactyls all over the place with such an injudicious vigour that, (unless you are in pa-

rental labour of a new kind of iambic pentametre) the rhythm writhes in agony under the twists you gave it. I have been obliged to suppress your anapaests ruthlessly allowing only a few. I have had to recast altogether the two dactylic lines (of course I know you didn't know them for that, but they are that) — also the last line to get rid of the cataractous flow and its wings. Released from its profound anapaestic dactylic agony its poetry comes out and turns it into a really fine sonnet.

28. 5. 37

MYSELF: In this poem should I put 'faint murmur' or 'radiant murmur'?

SRI AUROBINDO: Faint away — all right — better than radiation.

MYSELF: Don't know about the sestet — especially this 'poisoned arrow'.

SRI AUROBINDO: "Poisoned" be hanged — otherwise it's very fine.

MYSELF: At night I felt damnably sleepy over the writing. What's the matter, Sir? Had to jump to bed disgusted.

SRI AUROBINDO: Result of inspiration I suppose — sends you to sleep.

29. 5. 37

MYSELF: Perhaps in all the poems there is a touch of inspiration, but is that going to be heightened by storing up for something and then allowing the gush? — that's the question before you.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a question before you, sir — not before me.

MYSELF: I have progressed much, you say? Very glad and thank you, Sir. But the latest poems don't seem to come to much, do they?

SRI AUROBINDO: What the big H do you mean? Don't come to much? What did you expect more than the praise that has been given? Want to be told that Homer, Aeschylus and Shakespeare all rolled into one were not a patch on you? What's the idea?

MYSELF: After putting so many double and single marginal lines you say only "Very fine". I am rather surprised to see this remark. Can you clarify?

SRI AUROBINDO: Again what the damn do you mean? When an English poet achieves a fine sonnet, he feels like a peacock and spreads his tail — and you say "only a fine sonnet". Well, I'm damned! Surprised myself to see your remark on my remark.

MYSELF: And about yesterday's poem, I don't feel like changing the last line. The poem hasn't come to much except as an exercise. You have said nothing about it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't talk blithering nonsense. Change that line and send the poem back to me.

MYSELF: X seems to be wounded by our and *your* silence. Do you think he may be more Pondicherry-minded by a little connection: soothing words, one or two poems, etc.?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Better send some soothing smacks from time to time.

MYSELF: By the way, you have absolutely forgotten to return that *Presse Médicale* with your notes. Brooding over it?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. Went to limbo.

31. 5. 37

MYSELF: Will you wake up from limbo and scratch something on the paper ?

SRI AUROBINDO: How can I when the whole thing has gone to limbo ?

1. 6. 37

MYSELF: I was struck by Romen's sonnet ! By Jove, looks like a sheer genii — I mean genius, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps both — genii producing genius.

7. 6. 37

MYSELF:

“This gentle breeze free from all petty cares
And fragrant peace of the blue-hearted noon....”

It is rather funny, no ? Breeze free from all cares !

SRI AUROBINDO: Care-worried breezes are gentlemen we don't know — on earth at least.

MYSELF: And breeze should be rather fragrant than the peace, no ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why the devil should any fragrance of breeze prevent peace from being fragrant too ?

MYSELF:

“With a tranced petal of the pale-white moon
Are a vast breath of God that with us shares.”

SRI AUROBINDO: What does the breath of God share with us ? our meals ?

MYSELF: Instead of saying “...that with us he shares,” I have dropped ‘he’ in order to be more English.

SRI AUROBINDO: How does the absence of a personal pronoun make something more English ?

MYSELF:

“While the dust-laden cries of empty day
Pierce the far sails of foam-wrapt marching time,
Beyond all reach the golden summit lay
Crowned with a lone cross bare, austere, sublime.”

I have tried to put in the idea of a cross over a church tower; but don't know the meaning.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where the devil is the church tower — you speak of a summit which by itself can mean only a mountain.

MYSELF: The rhythm of the couplet seems flat. What do you say?

SRI AUROBINDO: Flat! the rhythm is like that of a carriage jolting on a road full of ruts.

10. 6. 37

MYSELF:

“...And shoot like bugle sounds through the
thick-spun
Night, to some focus in the infinite space.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Umph — bugle sounds shooting through a cloth?

MYSELF:

“A sombre waste of heaving waters deep.”

You might curse the *deep*, but I shall curse also if you change it in order to make a different rhyme!

SRI AUROBINDO: In order to avoid your curse I have kept the deep but turned it into a noun: ‘Her sombre waste as of the heaving deep.’

MYSELF: In the couplet I have repeated the word cloud. Any harm?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have repeated Night so I am obliged to tolerate a similar offence.

12. 6. 37

MYSELF: If the stars are of melody, why the deuce should one weep?

SRI AUROBINDO: Stars of melody means opera singers, who can, I suppose, weep. Melodies can also be sorrowful. But if it is real stars you mean I don't see why they should weep.

MYSELF: The last stanza seems too surrealistic. What?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well — there is a rather mystifying and alluring incoherence. Still —

MYSELF: But why the devil am I having so much difficulty in writing? English stream is drying up or the lyrical attempt bringing the pain of labour?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably. It is besides, I think, the melancholy Jacques in your imagination who is interfering. Perhaps the higher Inspiration wants to find a lyrical form and he cuts in with the sorrowful strains of the past — wrinkles on a smooth face, you know. So the stars can't manage their melody.

13. 6. 37

MYSELF: Guru, do you find anything in this poem? "Wandering on the wild seas of thought" won't do perhaps?

SRI AUROBINDO: "Voyaging seas of thought" is a piece of highway robbery; you might just as well write "To be or not to be that is the question" and call it yours.

MYSELF: Please read Surwardy's poems and give your opinion on the one about the old man's tears.

SRI AUROBINDO: Am obliged to postpone these tears — mine as well as the old man's.

14. 6. 37

MYSELF: "Voyaging seas of thought" — highway robbery ? Shakespeare's or Sri Aurobindo's ? !

SRI AUROBINDO: Wordsworth — one of his best known lines.

MYSELF: Guru, here is the tail of the poem I had begun. I am afraid the typing is as pale as the moon's eye and the tail as mistily mystifying as the head ! What ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Agree.

MYSELF: I hope you get the link throughout. Is it poetic ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very. Don't know what it all means, but meaning is superfluous in such poems. The more mystifying the better.

15. 6. 37

MYSELF: Are some of the lines in today's poem, too long for a lyric ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not depend on the length of lines but on whether the rhythm sings or not. If it talks instead of singing, then the rhythm is not lyrical.

16. 6. 37

MYSELF: You are surely surprised, staggered at the long ethereal lyric I have sent you !

SRI AUROBINDO: Staggered is not the word for it. What on earth have you done ?

MYSELF: See, Sir, it came and I wrote. I feel it is a good fish.

SRI AUROBINDO: Fish or fishy ?

MYSELF: I have caught though I am not sure whether it is a sprat, trout or a salmon.

SRI AUROBINDO: A sprat, sir, a sprat and a weird one at that.

MYSELF:

“...Hush, tread softly like a bride,
See, the night is dreaming.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Good God !

MYSELF:

“Between the shadows of her curved lips
A white smile is brimming;”

SRI AUROBINDO: Christ ! Woogh !

MYSELF:

“Oh, what angels have come to kiss
Her virgin face,
What rapture thrills her soul
With diamond rays !”

SRI AUROBINDO: Holy Virgin !

MYSELF:

“Do not wake her, let her sleep
Through the desert-day.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Who ? Night ? Where on earth is she sleeping ?

MYSELF: A bit of philosophy and metaphysics has spoilt the poem intended to be a fine piece of poetry, no ?

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, what possessed you to write in this vein of the most tender and infantile Victorian sentimentalism in this year of the Lord 1937 ? And who or what on earth are you writing about, Night sleeping ? What's the idea ? It sounds as if it were the sleep of Little Nell (Dickens).

MYSELF: Please try to restore it to its deserving beauty.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid I can do nothing unless you shed some light on what you can probably mean. At present I am at sea.

MYSELF: A rather funny idea, no ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very funny.

MYSELF: Can Night sleep ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Never heard of her behaving in this way before.

17. 6. 37

MYSELF: Sir, I have shoved the poem back to its own century ! But that's what comes of hooking ! Where does your theory of hooking go ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on what you hook on to.

21. 6. 37

MYSELF: In this poem a 'pale moonlit night appears mist-laden, and leaves look like a smile. Will that do ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, you have sharp eyes to see the leaves smile through a mist-laden night.

MYSELF: And I have made the leaves quiver, if you won't quiver at it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I read it without a quiver.

MYSELF: Don't see any link in the poem. So instead of 'weary traveller' it could as well be 'weary sheep', I suppose ! "I wait and wait like a weary tramp".

SRI AUROBINDO: Sheep !!! why not "cat" at once ? "I wait and wait like a weary cat" would be very fine and original.

MYSELF: But God knows what to write next. As it is, the poem doesn't seem to say much.

SRI AUROBINDO: If God knows it is all right. Evidently he knows what he is doing.

MYSELF: But what kind of poetry am I writing now ? Very funny surrealism !

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nothing surrealist nor funny.

MYSELF: And funnier that I should write these poems — a logical, medical, practical man, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is your idea of yourself ? Queer.

22. 6. 37

MYSELF: How is this line:

“Recumbent trees lost in their inward peace
Hum a glowing tune” ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Trees humming a glowing tune is rather too surrealistic.

MYSELF: Wouldn't 'recumbent palms' be better ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Recumbent means lying on one's back on the ground. Palms do that ? Never saw it.

MYSELF:

“While from a hushed sleep of the sea
A pellucid dream is strewn.”

Does this line remind you of Wordsworth's 'fields of sleep' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, hundred miles away from any such thing.

MYSELF: Yesterday I thought K was going for T.B. or pneumonia. But where are they ? In one night everything over !

SRI AUROBINDO: Shobhanallah ! With your diagnosis one would have expected him to be already in Paradise.

23. 6. 37

MYSELF: As for K, no Sir, not in Paradise but in hell of agony, suffering, fever, red hepatisation, grey hepatisation, etc., etc. (nothing to do with liver, though).

SRI AUROBINDO: What on earth is this hepatisation ? Where ? Lungs ? Pneumonia ? What else ? Kindly be less cryptic.

MYSELF: I am not sure of the second stanza of my poem. How about amputating it altogether ?

SRI AUROBINDO: The sooner the better.

24. 6. 37

MYSELF: Well, red and grey hepatisations are parts of morbid anatomy. When there is pneumonia, lungs undergo pathological changes from red to grey and get the solid appearance of liver. So the stages are called red and grey hepatisations. Nothing alarming, you see.

SRI AUROBINDO: But hang it all ! Has he pneumonia or not ? Is there fever now ? Alarming or not, what is his present condition ?

MYSELF: Black despair has swallowed me up to the neck, except for the hand with which I write ! As regards sadhana, don't find any rosy tint anywhere. All clouded, clouded and shrouded. As regards poetry, same, if not more.

SRI AUROBINDO: Whoosh ! Anyhow as regards your poetry it doesn't seem to me there is any ground for any indulgence in this black luxury.

25. 6. 37

MYSELF: But I told you long ago that K is hale and hearty and that was the miracle: no fever, nothing at all. You said that according to my diagnosis you expected him to be in Paradise; I said no, not so early, but in hell of suffering etc., that's all. That grey hepatisation troubled you, eh ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Naturally, if you say that a fellow who is supposed to be hale and hearty, is brown and grey with a mysterious hepatisation and suffering a hell of agony and not yet in Paradise !

MYSELF: This poem is pure and straight hooking, but where ? God knows as He has known so far.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, evidently the Hooked wanted to say something and had a shot.

26. 6. 37

MYSELF: This poem is absolutely hooking, Sir! As great poets usually do, you know, the whole thing simply came down, so it must be a genuinely great creation, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Come down it did! As for the great creation, well —

MYSELF:

“Tears fall one by one, like silver dew
Whispering voices cluster round,
Dark monstrous presences dance in glee
As in Death’s burning ground....”

If you have tears, you can wipe them off, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: I haven’t. I kept them.

MYSELF: Now, do you admit that it is a masterpiece or are you staggered? Pray, which?

SRI AUROBINDO: I was staggered, but I hooked on myself to see what the Inspiration was after, and well, there you are. Two lines all my own, sick moon and Nature’s fall. Couldn’t help. Your ‘eventually fall’ was too prosaic for words and your ‘pale glimmers of hope’ too romantically too.

27. 6. 37

MYSELF: Here is another masterpiece hooking on again, and seems a colossal sample of incoherent utterances. Please try to bring it to a Grecian perfection. And if you succeed in the task, kindly illumine me.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have succeeded. Hooked on again and you must admit that everything is now coherent, cogent and masterly!!!

MYSELF: Can’t interpret your exclamations about patient D! What do you say to cod liver oil?

SRI AUROBINDO: He is already oily and greasy enough.

28. 6. 37

MYSELF: Have you brushed aside Surwardy's poems ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, I have combed them only. I send you the results. A few lines are extremely fine, others are very good, others give a fine poetic turn. But he lapses from all that to a modernist rhythmlessness and triviality to which I cannot get accustomed. Anyway — fashion is fashion and the Time spirit has its tricks, — so I leave it there.

MYSELF:

“The moon's pale songs ringing in the dark
Are its own mystery-voice....”

Can songs be pale ?

SRI AUROBINDO: May, but moon's songs are rather toffee.

29. 6. 37

MYSELF: Yesterday what did you write, Sir — Moon's songs are rather '*toffee*' ? Toffee ! Gracious ! Bonbon ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, too sweet-sweet.

MYSELF:

“...While from the girdled clouds
Cascades of immortal wine flow
And drench the desert sand that shrouds. .”

SRI AUROBINDO: You really must make your metaphors a little possible !

MYSELF:

“...The mighty streams of a luminous flood
Resuscitates from a deadly swoon,
With wines of immortal blood.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Christ ! What to do with this ?

MYSELF: What do you think now of this piece, Sir !
What do you think — fine, very fine, eh ? Never mind
what you say, but I find it damn fine !

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, I fully admit it. No need to bully
me into assent with a damn. Amen !

MYSELF: But the revolution in rhythm is not my fault.
Sometimes you allow truncations, sometimes you don't.
What to do ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Revolutions of rhythm must produce
new rhythms, not no rhythm at all.

MYSELF:

“The stars slowly fall into a web of swoon
And night's motionless sea....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, this can't be. It suggests an in-
visible spider.

MYSELF:

“In a far isle of golden peace
Thy languorous note is heard,
Pulsing the hushed white silences
With heaven's inspired word.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't pulse a silence — nobody can,
not even you.

MYSELF: In the other poem, is it 'rapture's couch' ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Couch, sir — what the deuce !

MYSELF: And in the other line is it 'threading' or
'threatening' at the end ? 'A voice threading the dimness,
faintly heard' !

SRI AUROBINDO: Threading, sir — why the deuce
should there be a Pondicherry squabble, however faintly
heard, in this business ?

2. 7. 37

MYSELF:

“O far-seeing Eye of a white shadowless fire,
Through the gloom-suspense of slumbering
centuries....”

SRI AUROBINDO: I think it is better without any gloom.

MYSELF:

“Thy vision travels like a lightning blaze
In the deep silence of the tempest-seas....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Silence of tempest seas? They are not usually so taciturn as that.

MYSELF: “Thy irresistible Power trailing through
space....”

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, an irresistible Power is not so lame as to trail.

3. 7. 37

MYSELF: I can't quite make out the link between the stanzas, and some things do not seem logical.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sir, it is quite obvious that your poem is hopelessly inconsequent. For a man of logic (?) such divagations must be a release, I suppose. However there is good stuff in it and I have tried to put the three meanderings right.

MYSELF: It is not blank verse, Amal says, as there are rhymes — seas, centuries, memories, etc.... What sort of a poem is it then?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us call it modern verse which is never anything; blank or unblank, but rhymes when it feels inclined to and doesn't when it isn't.

MYSELF:

“Dim utterances of starry notes,
Hyaline clouds in the sky's blue glades....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Clouds can be hyaline? Never saw

any like that. Don't like your sky's blue glades — too pretty-pretty.

MYSELF:

“...Can lift us to an unvalled release
On the topless hills of God-delight.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Rather excessive for even a hyaline cloud to do.

4. 7. 37

MYSELF: I am sure you won't find much inconsequence here, and you will be charmed by the subtle beauty of the poem....

SRI AUROBINDO: Great Jehovah!

MYSELF: ... except perhaps at places it may be too 'toffee' for you!

SRI AUROBINDO: The toffee is there!

MYSELF:

“I am still far away
From thy haloed feet.
While the dawn-birds sing in their nest...
The clouds from the land of snow
Bring their white offerings...
The moon's pale line of trance
Becomes an angel-face ...”

I hope the 4th and the 5th stanzas are in line with the first three, what? You may be swearing, “Oh God, again that Victorian romanticism! What has possessed this fellow?” etc., etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: They may be, but in line with what? What the deuce have all these birds and clouds and moon and things got to do with your being far away? I have stuffed in a mystic touch or two in order to make people think “Ah, ah! he means something after all! something deep and shiny.”

MYSELF: Is the conclusion effective? And the poem?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if a perfectly irrelevant circum-

stance flanked in into the beginning and end can't be effective, then what can ?

As for the poem, it can be very shiny if you transfer it from Nature to super-Nature. Otherwise the prettiness or toffee duel is too much in play. That's why I have supered as much as possible.

MYSELF:

"A luminous spark born of the Infinite
To lift us to an unvalled release."

These are my lines and in the other stanza you have added:

"A greater Breath, a fiercer stress
Must lift the slumbrous wings of the soul,"

so 'lift' has been repeated, though effective.

SRI AUROBINDO: Have turned the first lift into free — more appropriate; for a breath and stress can lift; but a spark ? unless it is a spark in gunpowder.

MYSELF: Don't you remember you had made a long remark on S's poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Vaguely.

MYSELF: It was on the 28th.

SRI AUROBINDO: What difference does the date make ? For a logical man — well !

6. 7. 37

MYSELF: As for J's case, you seem to be much behind time, Sir ! You don't favour these new discoveries ?

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that ? About the blood injection juggle ? I told you it was fashionable and you could fash along with it if you liked or rather if J liked — provided André did it.

7. 7. 37

MYSELF: You said that it was fashionable, but hinted 'that you don't like the fashion: 'If you liked or rather if

J liked' — doesn't it mean that ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense, sir. Where on earth did I hint anything ? Where did I write that ? I said it must be done by André if at all — which had to do with the person who is to do it, not with anything else. For the rest I said if J consents, you can try it. Where the hell in that simple phrase is there anything about either my disliking or your liking or anything else that you have put into it ? Really now !

MYSELF: ...God knows how to cure S !

SRI AUROBINDO: If he does, send him a telephone !

MYSELF: Now about my poetry !

“...From each petal you shed
A hue of fragrant peace
On life's wild and far-spread
Reveries.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Wild reveries ? It sounds like a wild sheep.

MYSELF: I am almost sure you will howl this time, seeing my poem. But I can't help it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I won't howl, but only sigh.

MYSELF:

“There you kindled a glow
Of a moon-haloed fire:
Like an endless music-flow
From heaven's golden lyre.”

I suppose you won't like this music flow compared to a glow.

SRI AUROBINDO: No; so I have divorced them....

8. 7. 37

MYSELF: My boil seems to have subsided, but the blessed legs are aching terribly, can't walk after my athletic exercises at this age, Sir. System won't bear it seems. Give some embrocation, please.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have been doing Olympic sports ?

What an idea !

MYSELF: Can a flame be compared to a cliff ? It is an eternal flame.

SRI AUROBINDO: It can't — however eternal it may be. This damned cliff gave me a lot of trouble. I have tried to circumvent it.

MYSELF:

“The Timeless seized in time's dark cry” —

Does it remind you of your “Timeless seized Time...” ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes; but it doesn't matter greatly. But I object to your dark cry — romantic, sentimental and superficial.

MYSELF: In the last stanza:

“The smile of a sun-haloed Face

It colours the bare voiceless sea

And desert's bleak, breathless and trammelled

space

With the heart-beats of a moon-white ecstasy.”

Can anything be coloured with heart-beats ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite lunatically impossible.

MYSELF: I suppose it can because the heart propels blood, no ? You don't agree ?

SRI AUROBINDO: This is not a poetic treatise on the functioning of the heart.

11. 7. 37

MYSELF: My boil is paining all the time. Please do something, otherwise I can't do anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why so boiled by a boil ?

MYSELF: The Darshan is coming next month and I can't remain in this condition and come to you with a glum face to see your glum face too !

SRI AUROBINDO: I won't be glum — I shall receive you with a cheerful grunt.

MYSELF: I am not able to keep myself steady for more than a couple of months. You will say — usual feature

in Yoga. That is no comfort to me. I'm getting discouraged.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish ! Be a spider.

14. 7. 37

MYSELF: Nose boil boiling down; terrible headache, fever too. Feeling fed up, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Cellular bolshevism probably.

15. 7. 37

MYSELF: What's cellular bolshevism ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Bolshevism of the cells surging up against the Tsar (yourself). Also the Bolsheviks carry on their propaganda by creating Communistic "cells" everywhere, in the army, industries, etc. You don't seem to be very up in contemporary history.

16. 7. 37

MYSELF: For S I can't increase evening meal yet. My idea is to build up gradually the diet so that the system may be accustomed and strengthened at the same time. No use upsetting the stomach, liver, etc. — what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose so. Don't understand the ways of a fallen stomach — sounds like a fallen angel — but S is not that (no angel — that is to say), whatever his stomach may be.

18. 7. 37

MYSELF: Could you whisper to me the names of a few of those lucky fellows who are enjoying the Brahman consciousness here, so that I may have a practical knowledge of what the blessed thing is like ?

SRI AUROBINDO: *NO, SIR.*

How can you have a practical knowledge of it by knowing who has it? You might just as well expect to have a practical knowledge of high mathematics by knowing that Einstein is a great mathematician. Queer ideas you have!

MYSELF: Will you make it clear to me what exactly the Brahman consciousness is?

SRI AUROBINDO: Eternal Jehovah! You don't even know what Brahman is! You will next be asking me what Yoga is or what life is or what body is or what mind is or what sadhana is! No, sir, I am not prepared to teach an infant class the A.B.C. of the elementary conceptions which are the basis of Yoga. There is Amal who doesn't know what consciousness is, even!

Brahman, sir, is the name given by Indian philosophy since the beginning of Time to the one Reality, eternal and infinite which is the Self, the Divine, the All, the more than All, which would remain even if you and everybody and everything else in existence or imagining itself to be in existence vanished into blazes — even if this whole universe disappeared, Brahman would be safely there and nothing whatever lost. In fact, sir, you are Brahman and you are pretending to be Nirod; when Nishikanta is translating Amal's poetry into Bengali, it is really Brahman translating Brahman's Brahman into Brahman. When Amal asks me what consciousness is, it is really Brahman asking Brahman what Brahman is. There, sir, I hope you are satisfied now.

To be less drastic and refrain from making your head reel till it goes off your shoulders, I may say that realisation of the Self is the beginning of Brahman realisation — the Brahman consciousness — the Self in all and all in the Self etc. It is the basis of the spiritual realisation and therefore of the spiritual transformation; but one has to see it in all sorts of aspects and applications first and that I refuse to go into. If you want to know you have to read the *Arya*.

19. 7. 37

MYSELF: Pus still coming out. Nose also angry!

SRI AUROBINDO: What a bad-tempered "pussy" cat of a nose!

MYSELF: I dreamt that the Mother is building a very big hospital. Dream of a millennium in advance?

SRI AUROBINDO: It would be more of a millennium if there were no need of a hospital at all and the doctors turned their injective prodding instruments into fountain-pens — provided of course they did not make misuse of the pens also.

20. 7. 37

MYSELF: Why so furious about injective instruments, Sir? They are supposed to be very effective.

SRI AUROBINDO: That does not make an increase of hospitals, illnesses and injections the ideal of a millennium.

MYSELF: But why the deuce are those instruments to be replaced by fountain-pens?

SRI AUROBINDO: I was simply adopting the saying of Isaiah the prophet, "the swords will be turned into ploughshares," but the doctor's instrument is not big enough for a ploughshare, so I substituted fountain-pen.

MYSELF: A swelling — size of a cherry has appeared inside my nose. The tip is damn painful. Knifing is not advisable. I hope it won't leave me with a nose like that of Cyrano de — quoi?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope not. That kind of nose wouldn't suit either your face or your poetry.

21. 7. 37

MYSELF: There is no uprush of sex or desire and all

that. But still a negative blank state !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it may be one of two things: (1) The vital has dropped down and says "if I can't have what I want in this damned world of yours alright I non-cooperate and ask for nothing." Hence the flatness — Result of course tamasic vairagya. This kind of thing often happens at a stage of sadhana.

(2) Drop to the physical — first complete acquaintance with the principle of Inertia proper to the physical when it is moved neither by vital, mind, nor spirit. Lies flat waiting for the breath of God or any breath to stir it, but making no move of its own.

Hold on and call upon the Spirit to breathe.

23. 7. 37

MYSELF: I couldn't very well take in L's history, for it is quite unnatural to get a wound in that position by falling, unless one had fallen head down. In the evening a different story came out, which is quite the opposite, you see. I suppose, better to trust than distrust, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Amen !

24. 7. 37

MYSELF: Really, Sir, you have caught a magnificent fellow — V, for Supramentalisation, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sir, in the Supramental world all kinds will be needed, I suppose. Then why not a supramental ass ?

25. 7. 37

MYSELF: In S's case same trouble continued or worse. Why are you silent on liver extract ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Extract liver — no objection.

MYSELF: In my poem what is the damn meaning of

all this ? What's this path ? What's the height ? Both being illumined by the moon etc. ? It seems I have simply described Nature giving free rein to imagination. Mystifying, no ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why do you want any damned meaning ? It is a mystic picture — plenty of mystic significance which is best left unintellectualised, but no damned meaning.

A height is a height of being, sir, and the seas are seas of the soul, and the path is a path to infinite peace and light. "That is all we know or need to know" as Keats has been telling you everyday for the last hundred years.

MYSELF: Then at the end, what's the 'slumbering seas' suddenly ? Can't make out, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why suddenly, man — you have been having seas and waters all the time.

MYSELF: It is a horrible mess, Sir ! No connections ! The beauty of the poem is buried under it, I fear, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord ! Lord ! If you had intellectualised the business with your connections there would have been no beauty in the poem or at least mystic beauty.

MYSELF: Surwardy's poems through ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Have not inspected the fellow yet. May perhaps do it tonight.

MYSELF: I couldn't understand in C's telegram — *psh*. Is it Paresh ? Got it at the last moment, by intuition, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see ! It needed intuition to find that out !

26. 7. 37

MYSELF:

"And we marched through barriers
Of brazen hills, and breathless shrouds."

"Breathless shrouds", what are they ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Damned if I know ! I have tried to

outdo you by transferring brazen to shrouds in place of breathless.

MYSELF: Please see Surwardy's poems and say something communicable to the old man !

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't want to communicate — prefer on this point to be incommunicable — not to you of course but to Calcutta (old man will hear of it).

28. 7. 37

MYSELF: S's pain, burning *normal* i.e. you understand I hope, this normal pain ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, of course. It is the patient who is abnormal.

29. 7. 37

MYSELF: People say I am getting absolutely bald, Sir. Two things I feared — one a big tummy and another a damned baldness. Couldn't be saved from one. If you can't grow new hair, please help to preserve the few I have, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: What one fears, is usually what happens. Even if there were no other disposition, the fear calls it in. Who knows, if you had not feared, you might have had the waist of a race-runner and the hair of Samson.

MYSELF: I read in the Mother's *Conversations* that skin, hair and teeth are very near to Matter and so, spiritual Force takes a long time in acting on them. Is it true ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Painfully true.

MYSELF: Then I have no chance till Supermind descends ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose not. And who knows what fancies the Supramental may have ?

MYSELF:

“A fathomless hush of infinity
Infiltrates its dark memories.”

Can ‘infiltrate’ be used transitively ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, transitive or intransitive, can’t be tolerated. Too prosaic and scientific.

MYSELF:

“The soul of night speaks with intense
Delight to the white source of peace....”

SRI AUROBINDO: What’s this kind of conversation ?

MYSELF: D wants the poems back, you know.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well — I will try to push my way through him.

30. 7. 37

MYSELF: This is absolutely a third rate poem. What to do ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What a queer card you are ! It is as good as the others.

MYSELF: No use asking the virtue of the poem !

SRI AUROBINDO: Very fine and glowing, sir.

31. 7. 37

MYSELF:

“Wandering like a lost midnight sun
In unseen subterranean worlds....”

Audacious to compare myself with a sun ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Be audacious.

1. 8. 37

MYSELF: The last two lines of the poem too long, perhaps ? Oh, N complains of evening fever for some days.

SRI AUROBINDO: Part of your poetry ? Can’t scan it.

3. 8. 37

MYSELF: Consciousness and intensities can rhyme ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not that I know of, but all things are possible in a world of infinite possibility.

MYSELF: Opinion on the poem, please.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right except for a rather amorphous rhythm. I have tried to morph it a little.

MYSELF:

“A dim star on the fringe of sky
Glowing with an incense-flame.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Never saw a star glowing with an incense flame or smelt its fragrance.

4. 8. 37

MYSELF: A has finished 3 Takadiastase bottles. He finds good effect from it. We require another bottle now. Should we buy it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Buy the take-a-distaste and keep his liver quiet for God's sake. He shows signs of starting his lamentations again. The bottle to keep the baby quiet !

6. 8. 37

MYSELF: If you have no light, let these poems remain, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have plenty of light and to spare.

MYSELF:

“...When a sudden wave of immortal breath
Blow over the night with a faint sound.”

SRI AUROBINDO: A wave doesn't blow.

You have twice joined a singular noun with a plural verb ! Symphony rouses, wave blows or rather doesn't blow.

8. 8. 37

MYSELF:

“New centuries open their eyes....”

You won't agree perhaps that centuries have eyes ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I agree to everything and anything — let them have ears also. When one can write like that, all objections vanish.

MYSELF: Couldn't manage the 3rd line.

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me. You have managed very well.

MYSELF: The idea of the poem is rather high-pitched, when the chords are low. Please mind only the poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: I do — It is magnificent.

MYSELF: Well, anything to say ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have said it. Why the hell can't you always write like that ? The inspiration came clean through this time.

9. 8. 37

MYSELF: Why the hell can't I write ? Why the hell indeed ! Because I don't want to — that's all !

SRI AUROBINDO: My 'why the hell' was an ejaculation, not a question.

MYSELF: If I were to ask you that question, I know your prompt answer would be — no poet can always maintain a high level ! Isn't that the answer ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously, if it is put as a question, that is the only answer. But it wasn't.

MYSELF: But can vigilance shine ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It can do anything. I have made it burn.

11. 8. 37

MYSELF: S is again bad, pain started right after lunch

and other troubles also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Does he remain quiet after the meal for a sufficient length of time or prance about?

MYSELF: I have scanned thus a line of my poem:

“Flash like/a light/ning inten/sity/,”

you don't seem to accept the scansion.

SRI AUROBINDO: Because that is purely arbitrary and contradicts the natural cadence of the line. It is not the cadence of an iambic line. Scansion is not a matter of arbitrary measurement, it must take account of the cadence of the language. For instance you might write and scan

O you/damned fool !/what an/ass re/ally !/
and call it an iambic pentameter, but it could not be anything of the kind !...

17. 8. 37

MYSELF: Darshan is over, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Darshan is over but *karshan*¹ is not.

18. 8. 37

MYSELF:

“Slumbering birds awake with a start....”

‘With a start’ O.K. ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No — it makes me start.

MYSELF: Shivalingam (a servant) has a boil on the face. Not very happy about it.

SRI AUROBINDO: He isn't ? Hard to satisfy these people !

19. 8. 37

MYSELF: About the servant, I'm sorry ! I meant that I am not happy.

SRI AUROBINDO: I supposed so.

¹ A hard labour.

MYSELF: I'm doubtful about this poem. One mind says very fine, another says damn ! So ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both are right — the damner because you didn't quite get the apt expression, the other because the substance *is* very fine.

MYSELF:

“My dreams are hewn from that white source
Wrapped with thy wondrous epiphanies !”

Epiphanies sitting comfortably ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. Dreams wrapped with epiphanies is not a comfortable chair for the latter.

21. 8. 37

MYSELF: Here is a queer sort of a dream poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: Looks like it.

24. 8. 37

MYSELF: Dr. André says that anti-anaphylactic injection is very good for eczema and asthma.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know what anti-anaphylactic means (my proficiency in quasi-Greek is not very great) but it sounds swell. No objection.

25. 8. 37

MYSELF: A, my friend's wife, wants to visit the Ashram. Can you provide a room for her ?

SRI AUROBINDO: ...there is the room next to M's — also bad, though not so bad as the other. Perhaps you know what kind of a neighbour M is — if the next door neighbour does anything of which she does not approve, it will be tempests without end and howling enough to take the roof off. I can't write these things publicly, so I put them before you confidentially and you will put matters in their fierce naked light before A for her

judgment and decision. She must decide with full knowledge of the circumstances so that she may not blame the Mother afterwards if trouble or discomfort is there. (I may add that even a cricket making a noise near her deprives M of sleep and sends her into flames of wrath or gulfs of depression). So there you are.

26. 8. 37

MYSELF:

“Breaking all crag-teeth distances
Of the dark abysmal dominion.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, this “crag-teeth” is a too obvious theft.¹

28. 8. 37

MYSELF:

“...Recalling to my memory dim-paced
Foot-falls of a paradisal star....”

SRI AUROBINDO: But, my dear sir, a star has no feet and the practice of a star walking about on 2 feet in the sky is rather grotesque, so I have had to insert a godhead of a star who can do it all right.

30. 8. 37

MYSELF: My store seems run down ! No words, images or ideas, all gone !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if a run down store can produce a poem like that, it is a miraculous run down store....

MYSELF: Please give an all-round poking, will you ?

SRI AUROBINDO: All right — I shall try to give the all-round poke.

¹ ‘Crag-teeth’ used by Sri Aurobindo in his *Bird of Fire*.

31. 8. 37

MYSELF: As for S, we have exhausted our means. One thing remains — liver extract which I have withheld till now.

SRI AUROBINDO: You can try that — since it is his liver. Let's see if it extracts him out of his agonies.

MYSELF: R came and asked for apomorphine. This drug is only used in urgent cases of poisoning where evacuation is immediately called for. We don't know anything about the case. We are asked to give certain drugs, we give; for what case etc. we don't enquire because he may not like it. What should be done in such cases in future ?

SRI AUROBINDO: God knows ! Perhaps, if it is anything really dangerous, play the Artful Dodger and, otherwise, pray fervently to God that nobody may be poisoned....

MYSELF:

“Half-veiled figures of unknown splendour
Smile with the happy utterance....”

Can they smile ?

SRI AUROBINDO: May or not, but smiling here risks being inane; so I dodge the smiles out.

1. 9. 37

SRI AUROBINDO: I send you the letter of a diabetic sadhak asking me if he can take rice once a day. I can only pass on the question to you. What shall I reply to his piteous and pathetic request ? For enlightenment, please.

3. 9. 37

MYSELF: Guru, I have worked over this poem for the

last two days and still if you find erratic metre, well, I am damned !

SRI AUROBINDO: You are not damned. Metre and rhythm all right.

MYSELF:

“The lofty vision of thy soul
Brings veiled divinities to light,
...Life's flickering smiles wither and die,
And leave a dreary emptiness
Of desert-space, with a faint sigh
Murmuring through its hollow days.

.....

But aeon-coiled earth-memories
Sparkle like a diamond flame....”

I don't see how these memories sparkle after the faint sighs. Can 'now' be put in ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but the sighs have evaporated under my pressure.

4. 9. 37

MYSELF: Guru, I hope you won't call this a Victorian, sentimental, romantic poem and make me crush my bones by a fall from the sky of ecstasy !

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing of that kind in it.
Your bones are safe this time.

5. 9. 37

MYSELF: By the way, you haven't returned my medical report book. Mother says it is not there ! How ? I sent it last night !

SRI AUROBINDO: Forgot to shove it in. Afterwards it got covered with the other books and files — so undiscoverable.

MYSELF: Heard the great news ? X singing in theatres !

Gracious, fancy that ! In theatres and perhaps singing spiritual songs ! Oh Lord !

SRI AUROBINDO: Bringing the highest to the lowest — quite spiritual !

MYSELF: Just now heard that he has made great friendship with Y.

SRI AUROBINDO: All are one, sir, one Brahman. Besides, the leading Man should get people to do all their work by himself doing all actions, *sarvakarmāṇi*, the Gita says so.

6. 9. 37

MYSELF: I am pained when I hear people saying — after all Pondicherry has brought X to this !

SRI AUROBINDO: Why can't they say he has acquired a Godlike *samatā* ? Don't you remember the *śloka* — A Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste are all the same to the sage ? So X can embrace even actors — hope, he will stop short of the actresses, though.

MYSELF: I think S will benefit by remaining in the hospital for some days. *This neurotics do you know.*

SRI AUROBINDO [underlining the second sentence]: What on earth does this cryptic sentence mean ?

But is this dried liver curable by treatment ? Mother says she had an acquaintance who suffered from it, but nothing could cure him. There was nothing left of him but bones and some appearance of skin. Only he kept it up to the age of 80 and died after burying all his relatives and most of his friends. But this S takes just the wrong attitude, making the most of his illness. Just read the letter I send you. What is all this jerks, hammering, beatings, lumpings, movements ? Neurotics ? faints ? if the latter, what do they "indicate" — to use a favourite phrase of sadhaks when relating their experiences.

MYSELF: "Of wild crimson desire" all right ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Too wild and bloody.

MYSELF:

“Green locks of virgin woods
Waived by a gentle breeze...”

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce is this “waived” —
You waive your claim, not your hair.

10. 9. 37

MYSELF:

“Distances of the bournless seas
Illumed by an eternal star.”

This second line seems rather funny, no ?

SRI AUROBINDO: This line is not satisfactory — I have
churned up a substitute.

MYSELF:

“...Recall the smile of haunting Presence
On the bosom of the woodland ways...”

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid it is quite out of tune
here and the line besides is poor. I have churned again.

MYSELF:

“...Winding through labyrinths of thought
Like the rippling course of a gyrate stream...”

SRI AUROBINDO: This rippling gyration is not successful. Have churned a third time.

14. 9. 37

MYSELF: In these two lines there are too many S's !

SRI AUROBINDO: I have beheaded one that was in excess.

24. 11. 37

MYSELF:

“O Beauty, write in immortal scroll
The passion of my creative fire.”

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid writing fire on a scroll

is too difficult an operation — even for Beauty unless she has become entirely surrealistic since I first made her acquaintance.

27. 11. 37

MYSELF:

“I tread one path while your rosy feet
Stain the grey dust of another way.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Stain suggests that the feet are not clean.

15. 12. 37

MYSELF: What do you think of my taking lessons in English metre now ? But at times I feel that often there's an improvement in Bengali poetry, I can try. Otherwise I shall be Jack of all trades, master of none !

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no harm in studying English metre. It won't prevent you becoming a John of some trades hereafter.

4. 1. 38

MYSELF:

“The wandering waters of my life
Wash thy eternal shore...
...But thy impregnable silence bears
With calm, their passionate moans.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord ! don't moan like that.

20. 2. 38

MYSELF:

“Brilliance breaking the night-shell
Like laughter-peels of a ringing bell.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord, sir ! A bell is not an orange.

22. 2. 38

MYSELF: Please have a look at this poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce is the meaning of 'lineage' here ? Lineage means ancestry. And what the greater deuce is "liege" ?

25. 2. 38

MYSELF: I am much delighted and relieved to find that you have not lost your sense of humour by your Supramental transformation, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where the deuce do you get these ideas ? From Dilip ? The Supramental being the absolute of all good things, must equally be the absolute of humour also. Q. E. D.

1. 3. 38

MYSELF: Chand sends me a wire saying, "Why silent ? great struggle, protection." Guru, I don't know why he says 'silent'. I have sent the Darshan blessings on 23rd or 24th which he must have received.

SRI AUROBINDO: But you have not given him protection.

5. 3. 38

MYSELF:

"Nature is apparelled with a poise
Like the wings of a drowsy bird...."

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, if you walk through Pondicherry apparelled only with a poise, the police would arrest you at once. What would happen to Nature if she tried a similar eccentricity, I don't know.

6. 3. 38

MYSELF: O dear, dear, dear, what have you done, Sir ?
Havoc, indeed ! You couldn't get the trochaic rhythm in
yesterday's poem ?

SRI AUROBINDO: My God, that was intended for tro-
chaic ? You are sure it was not anapaestic or dactylic or
all three together + iambic ? That would be a more ac-
curate description of it. I couldn't make out what metre
was intended so I reduced all to a single one, octosyl-
labics.

8. 3. 38

MYSELF:

“...You bring
A rapture from the vast untrod
Spheres of Light through slumbering
Arches of misty groves....”

SRI AUROBINDO: ...And how is the rapture brought
through groves ? A woodland promenade ? I think both
the mist and the groves ought to disappear.

MYSELF:

“The scented air your gold locks leave
Haunts like a heavenly piece of art.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Doesn't it suggest that she was using
a fragrant hair oil ?

MYSELF: There's plenty of romanticism and incoher-
ence and outburst, perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: R and I are there in plenty, but O
is not in evidence.

MYSELF: Should the word 'frost' go ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it might be left to freeze.

MYSELF: And what's Bedlamic, please ? Never heard
of him, I'm sure !

SRI AUROBINDO: Bedlam is or was the principal luna-

tic asylum in England. You have never heard the expression "Bedlam let loose" etc. ? Bedlamic syntax = rollickingly mad syntax.

9. 3. 38

MYSELF: You said that I have found myself in English poetry. Now it seems I have lost myself, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You are flopping about a bit, but not lost.

10. 3. 38

MYSELF:

"...The rich sun-mirrored fuming blood
Running through choked earth-laden pores."

SRI AUROBINDO: What's this bloody fuming phenomenon ? Won't do at all. Pores too ! It suggests a bloody sweat like Charles IX's (of France).

MYSELF: Is the construction all right ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, can't make out the head or tail of the beast.

11. 3. 38

MYSELF: Guru, you must admit that I have hit this time, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Bull's eye !

14. 3. 38

MYSELF:

"O symbols of His jewelled reverie
Burn myriad-hued
On my diamond altar a prophecy
Of His solitude."

You shift the accent in prophecy ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see how shifting the accent on prophecy (quite impossible) would make it better. There would be no rhyme as *ecy* can't rhyme with *rie*, but only with "greasy" or "fleecy" and the whole thing would sound like an Italian talking English....

16. 3. 38

MYSELF:

"Shine on their path, O star-hearted Dawn
With your gold-crested sun;
The quest of dumb centuries burns upon
Their dim flame-pinion."

SRI AUROBINDO: The first two lines are all right, the last two not. It is a devil of a job to get a true rhyme for dawn! and a true rhyme is badly needed here — "drawn" "fawn" "paw'n" "law'n" "saw'n" — none will do, not even Bernard Shawn. Got a stroke of genius with a hell of a compound adjective [dim-withdrawn]. For the rest I have sandwiched some of your words in here and there and got out a something. I think it does well as a close.

17. 3. 38

MYSELF:

"Heart-beats of a lustrous life,
In myriad images unfurled."

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! How do you unfurl a heart-beat?

19. 3. 38

MYSELF:

"Floating like a nightingale's moon-crested song
On the enamelled ocean-floor."

SRI AUROBINDO: Nobody can float on a floor. Try it and see !

21. 3. 38

MYSELF: I'm afraid "God" is coming too much in this poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where is he ?

MYSELF: Seen my scansion ? Too great, perhaps ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Never heard of such scansion in a trochaic metre. Is it the new prosody ? Much too great.

Besides, what kind of grammar is "a myriad" with a singular noun ?

22. 3. 38

MYSELF:

"...Flowing like the rays of gold impregnable
Sun, on sky-blue dome."

SRI AUROBINDO: Ugh, sir ! Sky-blue dome is as stale as hell.

26. 3. 38

MYSELF: "Voices of some birds are heard...."

SRI AUROBINDO: Some birds ? Very vague and weak — unless some in American sense ! Put anything else, e.g. sky-birds.

MYSELF:

"...Pouring from their luminous-rhythmed feet
Songs of a magic-hearted moon."

SRI AUROBINDO: Never ! If people began to sing with their feet, the world would be startled into a magic-hearted swoon.

MYSELF: Guru, how is this poem ?
SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that's *some* inspiration ! (American sense of some !) O.K. to the nth degree....

MYSELF:
“Leave in the gloom of our heart’s beauty-
haunted shore
Trails of your Spirit’s moon-pearled gloom.”

We can even put 'grey' instead of 'beauty'.
SRI AUROBINDO: A shore with heart-beats! Merciful Christ, protect us! heart's shore also is rather queer — in the other version it was softened down by the greater queerness of the beauty-haunted.... Perhaps if we put "grey-haunted shore" that would phantomise the heart sufficiently to allow it to have a shore.

MYSELF: Guru, I fear this is only a sprat!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a sprat, sir; it is a goldfish. You seem to be weak in poetical zoology.... If you can produce more sprats like that, there will be much wealth in your fisheries. It is much better than the other recent ones, except the stress poem — nothing decorative, — all there !

MYSELF: About yesterday's poem, I am still "weak" in finding the "gold" you found in my fish. I don't see what beauty is there to make you mark certain lines thrice. I admit it is well-built and devoid of decoration, but to see it as you see it—well, could you explain a bit? But I can increase this sort of "wealth" if you are at my back!

SRI AUROBINDO: There is probably a defect in your solar plexus which makes it refuse to thrill unless it receives a strong punch from poetry — an ornamental, romantic or pathetic punch....

MYSELF:

“And thy magic vastness wraps my secret hours
With its conquering breath of flame....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Breath won't do. You have breathed once already.

5. 4. 38

MYSELF:

“They are at thy touch reborn
Into new shapes and thoughts;
And my soul's prayer adorn
With their bright starry dots.”

SRI AUROBINDO: This is decoration with a vengeance dottily so. One might just as well write

“And my soul's verandah adorn
With starry-red rose-pots.”

Then the soul of Donne would rejoice. But Donne should be doffed here.

MYSELF: Do you find any meaning here?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, except that the dots have too much meaning.

MYSELF: “Mystery's heavenly fane” all right?

SRI AUROBINDO:

Get rid of this *fane*,
please. So long as we keep
it, all emendations
will be in *vain*.

MYSELF: Can ‘flames’ be made singular?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it can't be singularised, as intuition will then walk off in a huff.

7. 4. 38

MYSELF:

“Dressed in white robes she came
A figure of purity....”

SRI AUROBINDO: This is not very impressive, these two lines — sounds too much like a lady's visit.

8. 4. 38

MYSELF:

“Murmuringly I roll
Along a grey *beech*....”

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce? Why a beech and not an oak or pine-tree? Or do you mean beach?

MYSELF: Guru, I bade the mind keep quiet and allow intuition to flow in and by golly, it has! what?

SRI AUROBINDO: By Jove, yes!

9. 4. 38

MYSELF: Here is another specimen.

SRI AUROBINDO: Jesus! There are already four short lines beginning with “Of” and I was going to add a fifth!!

10. 4. 38

MYSELF: Guru, this is rather a monotonous piece!

SRI AUROBINDO: Rather difficult this metre — it dances too much.

MYSELF: By the way, you are sitting comfortably over Nishikanta's poem. He will make my life uncomfortable when he comes back, saying I have done nothing for him!

SRI AUROBINDO: To be able to be comfortable is so

rare in this world of discomfort ! However I may see whether I can sit up one day and look at the thing.

19. 4. 38

MYSELF: The Muse is too whimsical. Still, I suppose there is some way, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know that there is, except to catch the inspiration by the hair when it comes, and keep it till the poem is done.

MYSELF: If I could know what time you send in the Force or what's your best time, I could get some better result.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have no best or worst time — it depends on God's mercy.

21. 4. 38

MYSELF:

“Through the night's pendulous haze
Stars wave and glow....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Pendulous ! You might just as well write “suspensive”.

MYSELF: Shall I put ‘unfurl’ ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good heavens, no ! *Don't* unfurl.

MYSELF: The rest of the poem I leave at your mercy, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: I have had no mercy upon it, as you can see. I have not put double lines¹ because it would be an encomium on my own ravages, but you can consider the lines to be there.

MYSELF: You seem to be in an illusion as regards my inspiration ! Do you think it comes in a rush !

SRI AUROBINDO: Never nursed such a thought.

¹ Sri Aurobindo used to draw vertical lines against those verses of my poem which he considered good — the number of lines (sometimes running even to 4) indicating their degree of merit.

MYSELF: I have to wrestle, Sir !
SRI AUROBINDO: So have I.

22. 4. 38

MYSELF:

“A withering ball
Of fire on the wide canvas of time
Fades to a dot....”

SRI AUROBINDO: What's this ball of fire on a canvas ?
Have you reflected that the canvas would be burned away
in no time ?

28. 4. 38

MYSELF:

“...the wan shadows are cast
From its sleepless whirl....”

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't make out for the life of me
what are these wan shadows and why they poke their
pale noses in here !

As you wrote it it is a dream-poem. I have tried by
a few alterations to wake it up....

29. 4. 38

MYSELF: Chand's wire says: 'Progressing again debt
case tomorrow.' *Voilà*, another, Sir ! I wrote to him not
to waste money on unnecessary registered letters and tele-
grams, but Chand is Chand ! So !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, let us accept the inevi-
table প্রকৃতিঃ যাতি ভূতানি which means — All animals fol-
low their nature.

30. 4. 38

MYSELF: “Haunted by wild desires” will do ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, too wild !

2. 5. 38

MYSELF:

“I have seen in thy white eyes
A spark unknown....”

SRI AUROBINDO: White eyes = eyes without pupils which would be rather terrifying.

3. 5. 38

MYSELF: “Replete with the essences...” how do you like it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Great Scott ! Replete ! essences ! petrol ? This line is terribly philosophic, scientific and prosaic.

5. 5. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I have absolutely gone for the Muse today in a terrible vengeance against her uncharitableness. The weather is splendidly hot and if the Muse makes me perspire still more, well I shall be turned into a perspiring idiot !

SRI AUROBINDO: But is a perspiring idiot worse than a dry idiot ? I don't think so.

MYSELF: “A purple shadow walks along....” It sounds rather like a sentry walking along, no ? Seems funny !

SRI AUROBINDO: “Walking along” suggests not a sentinel but someone taking a constitutional stroll on the beach in the hope of getting a motion. Too colloquial.

MYSELF: “Life is a lonely journey....”

SRI AUROBINDO: ? For most it is a chattering peopled journey —

7. 5. 38

MYSELF: Guru, when I read that your method of writing poetry is the same as mine, I said: 'The shishya's method *must* be the same as the Guru's,' but when I read the rest of your letter, I sat down ! Calm of intuitive reflection ! O Lord, how to do that ? Your Intuition says everything to you ? Nothing have you to think whether right or wrong etc. ? Alas ! how then can the shishya follow the Guru !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Heavens ! After a life of sadhana you expect me still to "think" and what is worse think what is right or wrong. I don't think even; I see or I don't see. The difference between intuition and thought is very much like between seeing a thing and badgering one's brains to find out what the thing can possibly be like. Intuition is truth-sight. The thing seen may not be the truth ? Well, in that case it will at least be one of its hundred tails or at least a hair from one of the tails. The very first step in the supramental change is to transform all operations of consciousness from the ordinary mental to the intuitive, only then is there any hope of proceeding farther, not to, but towards the supramental. I must surely have done this long ago otherwise how could I be catching the tail of the supramental whale ?

8. 5. 38

MYSELF:

"My soul keeps its wide calm
Amidst the surge...."

SRI AUROBINDO: For heaven's sake don't bring calm in at the end of a line. One has to rhyme with balm, palm or psalm, and to bring any of these in without an obvious effort of manufacture is a Herculean feat. Of

course if you slam in an Imam¹ or warm up to an alarm, it becomes easier but at the cost of an uneasy conscience.

9. 5. 38

MYSELF: These two poems followed as if one piece. But I find some difference. Both seem to have a similarity in thought.

SRI AUROBINDO: They seem to me separate. Probably the broadcaster above forgot to announce "Here I begin some new stuff."

10. 5. 38

MYSELF: Though I didn't get into a fit, I couldn't escape a slight fine tremor over two 'beyonds'. How do you explain that ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, to silence the tremor the best is to substitute "above" for the second "beyond" — peace be with you !

14. 5. 38

MYSELF:

"Visions of deep heavens call,
And bring their light
In the silent silver fall
Of dew-laden night."

SRI AUROBINDO: Decorative and not effective at that. Let us mysticise the decoration.

MYSELF:

"Voices of centuries wake
And fill with song,
The cloud-hushed timeless ache
Of white fire-throng."

¹ A religious leader of the Muslims.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce are these centuries and what the deuce is this ache? And how can ache be filled with the song of centuries? And what is a cloud-hushed ache? What you have written is surrealist and incoherent; I proceed to make it mystic and unintelligible.

15. 5. 38

MYSELF:

“The zephyr from an inscrutable height
Blowing like strains of a lyre....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Zephyr from an inscrutable height? The zephyr is a sweet little romantic wind incapable of heights.

MYSELF: With difficulty I've avoided moon, stars, etc., but in one place I have put 'sun' which I hope you will kick out.

SRI AUROBINDO: Kicked!

16. 5. 38

MYSELF:

“No more the dark world calls
With its alluring voice....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord, sir — let this dark world and its alluring voice be far from us. It jars here, bringing in the note of the often heard obvious.

17. 5. 38

MYSELF: Guru, again with a Herculean effort I have kept out most of my blessed dear terms, with what effect you know.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, only aureole remains. There is of course immortal and eternal, but these we have allowed. Also “glowing, wine, splendour” perhaps; but if we go too far in exclusiveness, your inspiration may cease

to glow also. So we will be moderate in our exactions on the Muse.

20. 5. 38

MYSELF:

“Lonely like a sheep I go
Along the watermark of time....”

How is this sheep ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Sheep is too sheepish — you might just as well say, “like a mouse.”

MYSELF: Guru, do you find any blessed progress ? Getting rather hopeless !

SRI AUROBINDO: A very fine poem, sir. Progress blessed, *not* hopeless.

22. 5. 38

MYSELF:

“A strange intensity glows
Through its wild frame
Sweeping all barriers flows
Its mystery-flame.”

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this domestic broomstick work on barriers ? If you mean sweeping away, you have to say so.

MYSELF: I have tried to drag the Muse out, has she come out ?

SRI AUROBINDO: She has come out but trailing three clichés-tails behind her. Most reprehensible conduct for a self-respecting Muse.

MYSELF: I fear the game is over, she has nothing for me !

SRI AUROBINDO: No fear !

MYSELF: Guru, I have hitched, I have pitched, I have hooked and dishooked ! You take a fancy to hook me on some 'insight' and 'inspiration' at very little expense of your Force and 'golden sprats' are caught ! Then suddenly you cut off the threads from below or above and my net is gone !

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me — did nothing of the sort. It was you who got dissatisfied with the sprats because of the sameness in the shine of their eyes, fins, tails and other accessories.

MYSELF: Showing me a future possibility, you shut partially at least, the opening. Now I knock and knock — nothing !

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all ! It is you have started tunnelling in another direction.

MYSELF: Can't make things so damn cheap, that's your idea, I suppose, but why I cook, I hook ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't "make" anything cheap or dear. They are so by nature. These, sir, are the usual vicissitudes of the poetic career and unless you are a Dilip or a Harin writing away for dear life everyday with an inexhaustible satisfaction and producing tons of poetic matter, you can't escape the said vicissitudes.

MYSELF: Now how far does this go in the hooking business ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Much better. Only one stanza hookless.

MYSELF: Chand says that one day he will commit suicide due to lack of faith ! My Gracious, are you specialising in a lot of sentimental screw-loose fellows as disciples ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It looks like it ! What a museum ! But this kind of collectioning has been my luck and not my intention.

27. 5. 38

MYSELF: Guru, some consolation that you realise I am "tunnelling." Please realise too that at one time the "tunnelling" may come to a bursting point !

SRI AUROBINDO: Hold hard ! hold hard !

MYSELF: The blessed stars have appeared again in this poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: Never mind ! Once in a way they can peep in provided they don't overdo it.

29. 5. 38

MYSELF: In view of my present obstinate difficulty, sometimes I think if it wouldn't be better to go out for a while and come back perhaps changed, transformed. If it is so, please allow me and many others to go every year. Your Supramental work will be made half easier !

SRI AUROBINDO: Logically, that would mean everybody in the Ashram taking a month's trip to the Himalayas, Calcutta, Cape Comorin, etc. and returning, if not as supermen, yet as fully-fledged psychic angels. Easy !

30. 5. 38

SRI AUROBINDO: S is complaining of a mysterious illness (fever) in which she gets very cold in the full heat of the day and her skin is cold outside but as hot as chillies inside. Perhaps as she is always complaining of catastrophic physical states like this, she might be shown to André like the other specimens.

31. 5. 38

MYSELF: Dr. André has given urotrophine and gardinal for S, shall we give them ?

SRI AUROBINDO: She refuses medicines with contumely.

2. 6. 38

MYSELF: In yesterday's poem, you seem to have put paean in 3 or 4 places. Is that so ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Paean ? I don't think I did it consciously — don't remember. In this metre I generally run to anapaestic-iambic, but I may occasionally flank in a paean or two in the exuberance of my soul.

3. 6. 38

MYSELF: Could you help me, Sir, with your I.C.S. knowledge, to solve my property tangle ? I.C.S. people are supposed to be Gods, you know, knowing everything !

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, sir ! I was a probationer only and had nothing to do with these elaborate idiocies. If I had been a practising civilian, I might have had to do it, but probably I wouldn't have done it and they would have chucked me out for insubordination and laziness.

4. 6. 38

MYSELF: Any influence of Wordsworth in my poem ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, any ? There are whole chunks of Wordsworth — esp. the childhood days and growing years etc.

7. 6. 38

MYSELF: Thank you, Sir, for yesterday's success. I was raging against you that you have left me alone ! Even a dribbling Inspiration can be miraculous, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Often more miraculous than the flowing ones.

13. 6. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I am not lucky enough to be able to follow your method. This little piece has taken me about 2 hours and after an hour's slumbering concentration, mind you !

SRI AUROBINDO: Let me remind you that Virgil would sit down and write nine lines, then spend the whole morning perfecting them. Now just compare yourself with Virgil; you have written 16 lines in 2 hours. That beats Virgil hollow.

14. 6. 38

MYSELF: You flatter me by comparing me with Virgil, Sir. But you forget that my 16, 20 lines are nowhere beside his 9 lines; and that he didn't require Sri Aurobindo's corrections !

SRI AUROBINDO: That is why he spent the greater part of the time trying to correct them himself.

16. 6. 38

MYSELF: Please read T's medical report tonight. I am absolutely staggered at her sudden voracious appetite. Finished one cabbage in the evening ! Have you pumped some Supramental Force into her stomach or what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have of course put pressure for no fever and a good appetite, but did not expect any supramental effects in the latter direction.

18. 6. 38

MYSELF:

“O sleepless star in the calm snow-white shore,
Open my barren heart to thy profundity

And make its wilderness more and more
A golden vision of thy prophecy.

On my dim hours thy glimmering shadow falls
And paints their edges with a timeless brush.
Transparent figures on its invisible walls
Are carved from rocks of thy luminous hush.

White flocks of birds perch on its towering height;
A gleam of heaven sparkles on their wings
And from the cavern of their soul of light
A nectarous flow of fountain music springs.

Their bright ethereal voices I can hear
Like echoing notes of a far wind blown lyre;
They seem to break upon my listening ear
In rhythmic waves of magical moon-rose fire.

My slumbering moments one by one arise
In the firmament of thy divinity:
Each is a miracle of thy Paradise
Burdened with a mysterious prophecy."

Guru, do you think a little star can do all that ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't !

MYSELF: There seems to be a lot of paint and colour.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is all colour and nothing else.

MYSELF: Either it is exceeding or damned — which ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Damned ! that is to say, romantic.

Let me say again that in condemning things as romantic, it is because they are of the wilted echo kind. "Nectarous flow" "fountain music" "bright ethereal voices" "echoing notes" "far wind blown lyre" "break upon my listening ear" etc. are perhaps new to you and full of colour, but to experienced readers of English poetry they sound as old as Johnny, — one feels as if one had been reading hundreds of books of poetry with these phrases on each page and a hundred and first book seems a little

superfluous. If they had not been written before, the poem might be pronounced very fine, but — . I have tried my best with three of the stanzas to organise them, but except for stanza 2 out of which a very fine image can be made and the two lines marked, with no entire success. The third and fourth stanzas are hopeless. Where the deuce does your inspiration draw these things from? From remembered or unremembered reading or just anyhow? It looks as if some unknown nineteenth century poet from time to time got hold of you to unburden himself of all his unpublished poetry.

21. 6. 38

MYSELF: Guru, yesterday's poem came in evening meditation — hence its intuitive character! Today's came through perspiring trance!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not intuitive but a very well-inspired perspiration. You seem to have got back your swing.

22. 6. 38

MYSELF: I fear it is a surrealistic business. I don't understand anything of it!

SRI AUROBINDO: As Baron says, "Why do you want to understand?" It is very fine poetry — according to Housman "pure-poetry", for his view is that the more nonsense, the greater poetry, or at least the purer-poetry. Of course it must be divine nonsense or let us say not "nonsense" but "non-sense". So there you are....

28. 6. 38

MYSELF:

"In the dreamward silence of the moon
I saw a bird
That had forgotten the luminous vasts

Weary and unstirred.

Out of a frozen solitude
Of decaying light
Whose feathers are shed one by one
On the floor of night."

SRI AUROBINDO: Whose feather? The bird's or the light's? Anyway what a dreadful image! Moulting?

MYSELF:

"The sudden resurrection comes
Within the slow
Fire of unremembered history
In its clustered snow."

SRI AUROBINDO: Now, look here, look here! There is a limit — some coherence there must be! This means nothing either to the brain or the solar plexus.

MYSELF:

"Then a new mystery of light
Begins to bear
Intensities of vision and hues
Within a prayer."

SRI AUROBINDO: These operations of the new light are a damned sight too mysterious.

MYSELF:

"That longs like a winged spirit to fly
Beyond the pale
Zone of terrestrial pathways
Under a veil."

SRI AUROBINDO: This flying under a veil is an acrobacy that ought not to be imposed on any bird or spirit. Besides, the bird was on the moon — how did the terrestrial pathways come in then?

MYSELF: Guru, this is a direct effect of reading Amal's lyrics which you praised so much.

SRI AUROBINDO: A terrible effect!

MYSELF: I am damn puzzled and baffled!

SRI AUROBINDO: NO WONDER!!!

The first two and a half stanzas are very fine, but the rest !! Well, well, well, this is nonsense with a vengeance; but the poetry is too pure for any plexus to stand. Something might be done with the fourth stanza if the feathers disappear out of remembered history and the clustered snow goes the same way. But I fear the last 2 stanzas are hopeless. I tried but my inspiration remained weary and unstirred by any rhythmic wave.

MYSELF:

“...And melts the snow
From its chilled spirit and reveals
Before its gaze
Columns of fire immensities....”

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should the bird want to go into fire ? Hot bath after a cold one ?

MYSELF:

“...The awakened bird
Now voyages with foam-white sails,
That vision stirred !”

SRI AUROBINDO: A bird with sails is unknown to zoology ! Or do you mean that the bird hires a sailing vessel to go into the fire ? Lazy beast ! And what is it that is shrouded by the vision, the bird or the sails ?...

MYSELF: If this poem doesn't stir your plexus, I am undone ! The expressions may not be apt and felicitous but coherence there is, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, except at the end where you make the bird a surrealistic animal with sails and stir the sails with a vision.

29. 6. 38

MYSELF: Dilipda has asked for a poem. I am sending the one enclosed but how much of your remarks should pass ?

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is only for Dilip, it doesn't matter. But there's something wrong. What's “this brief mys-

tical experience" coming in without any syntactical head or tail? Either I have dropped something or you have dropped or else missed. Please look again at my original hieroglyphs.

30. 6. 38

MYSELF: I am sending you 'the original hieroglyphs' of your poem. I think you have dropped one 'of' before "this brief... experience."

SRI AUROBINDO: I haven't, but as I thought you have transmagnified what I wrote — It is not mystical but mortal and not experience but existence, "this brief mortal existence".

3. 7. 38

[Sri Aurobindo put 3 marginal lines against 2 verses of my poetry with some of his corrections —

"And the *cry of the centuries*
Pass from your ears",

and wrote]:

This triple line is a compliment to my correction, not to your version.

7. 7. 38

MYSELF:

"The growing heart of day
Is lily white...."

Lily white cheap?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not only cheap but gratis.

MYSELF: Guru, this is again a riddle of a poem!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not very cogent, whether realistically or surrealistically. But see how with a few alterations I have caged it. (Excuse the word, it is surrealistic 'it'). I don't put double lines as I don't want to pay too many

compliments to myself. I don't say that the new version has any more meaning than the first. But significance, sir, significance ! Fathomless !

10. 7. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I am puzzled ! Your additional stanza to yesterday's poem is magnificent. But how can a 'body' be born, either God's or an animal's, even if we admit God has a body ?

“From which the cosmic fire
Sprang rhythmic into Space
That God's body might be born
And the Formless wear a face.”

SRI AUROBINDO: It is I who am awfully puzzled by your puzzlement. A body is not born ? When the child comes out of the womb, it is not a body that comes out and the coming out is not birth ? It has always been so called in English. You have never heard the expression “the birth and death of the body” ? What is it then that dies after having been born ? The soul doesn't die, nor is it the soul that comes out of the womb ! You think God cannot have a body ? Brahmo idea ? Then what of the incarnation — is it impossible ? And how does the Divine appear in vision to the bhakta except by putting on a form = a body ? But if you object to God having or getting a body, you must also object to the Formless wearing a face; so the whole significant stanza becomes nonsense. And therefore I suppose, pure poetry. All the same one can understand a metaphysical (not a poetic) objection to God having a body if one believes that the Infinite can't manifest the finite or as finite, but that an animal's body is not born is new to me.

11. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“A fire leaps from range to range
And touches a height
Unshadowed by time’s sudden change
Or the bulk of night.”

Night has a bulk ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It may have, but it is not polite or poetic to talk about it — gives the idea that she is corpulent.

MYSELF: Here is D’s royal mail. I have copied the whole letter out for you. Hope it is not worse than his original !

SRI AUROBINDO: For this relief much thanks !

12. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“I dive into the fathomless
Riches of God.. ”

SRI AUROBINDO: One doesn’t dive into riches — a tankful of bank notes !

15. 7. 38

MYSELF: You have bandied me for my inexperience, calling me sheep, lamb, kitten and what not. You will exhaust the whole zoology on me, methinks !

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not ? man has all the animals within him as he is an epitome of the universe.

16. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“...the clamouring expanse

Of life whose hungry passion and fire
Are quietly subdued
Into a motionless somnolence....”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Quietly” is too quiet and “somnolence” is too lakadasical.

MYSELF: What nonsense this poem is, God knows. And I don’t understand the strange snake !

SRI AUROBINDO: Evidently, you went over the line that divides sublimity from nonsense. I have tried to bring the poem back to the sublimity side of the dividing line — God knows with what success. I hope the strange snake has become a little more natural now.

19. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“...an omnipotence
Crowned with a white
Immaculate destiny.”

Don’t white and immaculate have the same meaning ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, one can be immaculate without being white; but it reminds of Gandhi’s “spotless white khaddar”. Your emendation is quite the right thing.

20. 7. 38

MYSELF: I am most disappointed with this poem, Sir ! What do you think of it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Doubly damned fine !...

MYSELF: By God, I am absolutely staggered by the dragon image ! Such things have been done before ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not before, but worse things than that are done nowadays.

MYSELF: If at any time I face public criticism, can I say that my Guru is to be blamed ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly.

MYSELF: As for N’s medical case, adenoids and ton-

sils, you know, to a great extent dull the intellect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Aided by self-imprisonment, I believe.

MYSELF: So whatever you sanction, please write against each one; otherwise he will bother me about your sanction and permission first.

SRI AUROBINDO: What to sanction when the doctors can't say what's what?

21. 7. 38

MYSELF: Why do you say that doctors can't say?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because you say "It *may be* either" and "if" and "if". According to ordinary logic, that means "we" does not know but either guesses or infers.

MYSELF: I don't find any localising sign but I suspect K is going in for pleurisy.

SRI AUROBINDO: !!!

MYSELF: Iodine is very often given, especially colloidal iodine injection is very good. But I heard from Dr. Banerjee that you don't favour internal iodine medication, is it true?

SRI AUROBINDO: What's this word? Cousin of colossal?

Mother does not favour in certain cases; as in those cases it has a bad effect. Can't say for N. But his subconscious is contradictory like S's and inclined to say No to any medicine.

MYSELF: And if it is due to extreme self-annihilation, why not tell him so?

SRI AUROBINDO: Where did you get this self-annihilation? I wrote self-centredness. N's self is not annihilated; it is there alive and kicking and governing everything.

What's the use of telling him? It won't go by the mere telling.

MYSELF: He comes and bothers and bothers saying

that medicine has no effect, I am not looking carefully....
Is his sight really so bad that he can't take up any work?
I don't know that eyes have to be much used in his electric supervision.

SRI AUROBINDO: So he believes.

You don't allow for the potency of auto-suggestion.

MYSELF:

“...Like a swan asleep
From frozen stillness of a lake
To an aureoled deep.”

SRI AUROBINDO: 4 ft. but no remedy. Theft from Mallarmé?

22. 7. 38

MYSELF: If you want to keep Mallarmé's theft what about that 4 ft.?

SRI AUROBINDO: I think it is better to keep the swan. I have cut the four footer down to a normal three footedness.

MYSELF: Can't this intuitive faculty grow in my medical sphere and make me see both the disease and the cure?

SRI AUROBINDO: But in medicine you don't hook on to the intuitive source.

23. 7. 38

MYSELF: So, Guru, another star dropped from your firmament? And after 6 years' luminous presence too!

SRI AUROBINDO: Luminous? Not very, and rather a shooting or at least tendency to shoot star. He was always going, going and twice or thrice gone but returned; now he is gone.

MYSELF: I was amused to hear that you gave N a big shout! I wish I had heard it! But I thought you had lost your capacity to shout!

SRI AUROBINDO: The Supramental (even its tail) does not take away any capacity but rather sublimates all and gives those that were not there. So I gave a sublimated supramental shout. I freely admit that (apart from the public platform) I have shouted only four or five times in my life.

MYSELF: Guru, your yesterday's outburst seems to be a part of a general movement; for I hear that our B had the courage to slap M yesterday. The fellow has some guts, I must say. But it is really striking that M kept calm when he could have easily pulverised the fellow! Either way, the Supramental seems to be descending this time, the head, I mean!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, that is a result of the supramental also! But perhaps M felt that B was too small and weakly a figure to demolish. He apologised to the Mother for having lost his control as far as to speak violently to B!!

25. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“Worlds have begun
To unroll like a time-wave,
Each measured beat
Filled with the ecstasy
Of its golden heat.”

I fear you will shout against this ‘heat’.

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, the heat would make anyone shout.

MYSELF: My days would have been still brighter perhaps if I had kept my vital free!

SRI AUROBINDO: The vital needs something to hook itself on to, but for a sadhak women are obviously the wrong things for it to hook itself on to — it must get hold of the right peg.

27. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“A rapturous throb of stars
I feel in my heart...”

SRI AUROBINDO: I think the stars might just as well not be there. It is difficult for a heart throb to be a star.

28. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“Some silver-throated nightingale
Has to my spirit brought
Unimaginable ecstasy....”

What’s this nightingale doing here ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Damned if I know, but let her sing.

MYSELF:

“My rock-white will manifests now
Through grey barrenness of time
Infinites crowned with the sun-glow
Of the withdrawn Sublime.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Rock-white would mean “white as a rock,” but a white rock is rarer than a white elephant.

29. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“My heart yearns now for thy divine
Primeval Word,
Bringing a sense of crystalline
Fire-ecstasy stirred

In every cell and lifted high
Into a gold
Vision of thy Infinity
Fold after fold.”

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think infinity can be rolled about like that, but it can be unrolled, that is revealed progressively and continuously before the sight.

MYSELF: Guru, I am afraid this poem has many defects in detail. It was written after a lot of castor-oil drugging !

SRI AUROBINDO: The castor-oil seems to have been effective at any rate....

30. 7. 38

MYSELF:

“...the earth is a rapt prayer
Rising towards a face
Whose fathomless splendour falls like rain.”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Whose” gives the impression that the face is falling.

MYSELF:

“My heart is steeped in reverie
And drinks a passionless wine.”

Being steeped can one drink ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, you can drink when you are wet.

3. 8. 38

MYSELF: Guru, so permission for Darshan given to S. Majuindar and staying with Dilipda too ? I also know him, he is really a very fine man.

Dilipda promises me a kingdom for a wire. If I can get your answer today, well, the kingdom will be one day earlier, as the wire will go today.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can wire and become a king at once.

.

8. 8. 38

MYSELF:

“Thy beauty shines crowning a limitless shore.”

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think beauty can crown a shore....

MYSELF:

“Wandering thoughts, sails of life drifted by
wind....”

SRI AUROBINDO: An extraordinary new metre and rhythm, this line !

MYSELF:

“Wandering thoughts, sails of life drifted by wind
Grow still on a transparent sea of hush
As an immensity from thy fathomless Mind
Falls like dawn-hues in an invisible rush.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Too rushing — moreover, how can there be an invisible rush of hues ? But this confounded hush of yours “opens” only to impossible rhymes: “bush, blush, crush, flush, brush, lush, mush, push, slush, thrush, tush, gush” — what can a serious poem do with these light-hearted and rollicking rhymes ? So I have kept rush and tried to do my best with it.

MYSELF:

“The whole universe seems to be a cry
To the apocalypt-vision of thy Name.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Damn fine, sir !

13. 8. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I became desperate and brought down this poem. God knows whether its head is in normal condition or is lacerated.

SRI AUROBINDO: No harm has happened to the poetry (whatever be the case with the head) except that rhythm

and metre are rather lacerated in some lines of the last 3 stanzas.

19. 8. 38

MYSELF: Did you see "the seas of rapture in my heart"? All right?

SRI AUROBINDO: Seas have not to be seen so much as swum on.

MYSELF: And how did you find the Bangalore scientists? They seem to have been much moved, God knows by what!

SRI AUROBINDO: The Supramental, I suppose!

MYSELF: One of them, the hardest nut, was on the point of tears! Just think!

SRI AUROBINDO: Again the Supramental! The Supramental is beyond all thinking.

22. 8. 38

MYSELF: Please send some new inspiration.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, well! We'll see.

MYSELF: How long can one keep this yogic attitude?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? A Yogi must always have a yogic attitude.

26. 8. 38

MYSELF:

"Lost in an ecstasy of germinal sound
That wanders through the night's shadowy
bars...."

SRI AUROBINDO: The deuce! what's an ecstasy of germinal sounds? And a wandering one at that?

MYSELF: Please sprinkle your supramental humour now and then. A too matter of fact dealing takes our breath away, or at least makes life damned harder, you

know. Or does it depend on the supramental Truth-sight ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the state of my inner humerus.¹

MYSELF: What a queer fellow your Supramental must be !

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't be queerer than the mental human ! But I suppose he will seem queer to the queer mental human just as the queer human seems queer to the queer vital monkey and the queer monkey to the queer material jelly-fish. All queer together and to each other !

27. 8. 38

MYSELF:

“O dream of solitude, visionary flame,
Made the lone deeps of my heart thy home....”

Visionary O.K. ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it isn't very complimentary, means usually an impractical fellow who has unreal “visionary” ideas.

MYSELF:

“Travelling through hollow spaces of day and
night
Towards its rich fruition in the Sublime.”

SRI AUROBINDO: Fruition ! would fructify in prose.

MYSELF: The last two stanzas are logical tails, I hope.

SRI AUROBINDO: The last three hairs of the tail needed a little combing and brushing.

31. 8. 38

MYSELF: Day by day things are getting difficult — more than your Yoga, Sir ! My head will break one day, be prepared for it please !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, when the head is broken,

¹ Uncertain reading.

a passage for a superior light is often created — so either way you gain, a safe head or an illumined one.

3. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“As if I had become infinity
And God his mystery to me confides.”

I have become a Father Confessor to God, what ?

SRI AUROBINDO: That's not a father confessor but only a confidant. A father confessor would be one to whom God confesses His sins, but perhaps you think the creation is a big enough sin in itself ?

4. 9. 38

MYSELF: Well, you have found no answer to my questions, so the delay ? !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, your arguments are not so overwhelming that I would find it difficult to answer; it was the time to answer that I did not find.

5. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“...Sharing its rapturous wine with everything
Till all creation be a soliloquy....”

What's this blessed soliloquy doing after a bout of wine ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, what else do you expect when a fellow is drunk ? But it is more decent to change it into an ecstasy.

MYSELF: Still you have no time, now when the correspondence has gone down ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Who told you that ? Since the first it has gone up or rather swelled up and my table is covered with 4 volume letters from one third of the Ashram.

MYSELF: I suppose you are busy doing something high and mighty !

SRI AUROBINDO: I would like to do something high and mighty but God knows how I shall do it at this rate.

6. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“...The magic breath of God’s omnipotent Grace
Comes blowing from his soul’s fathomless deep.”

SRI AUROBINDO: It sounds as if God had lost his breath and was panting in a vast distress !...

The first six lines are very perfect and beautiful, but after that histories begin. I think the histories might be replaced by geography or anything else and God must really stop blowing and panting.

MYSELF: How do you like this line:

“...Crowned with diamond fruits of everlasting
ecstasy.” ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I think I should object to a crown of fruits (apples ? oranges ? jack fruit ?).

MYSELF: The Bangalore scientist writes that he has written to the Mother, but no reply ! Asks me to enquire. What is the mystery, please ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What mystery ? Do you imagine I am conducting a voluminous correspondence with people outside ? Put that pathetic mistake out of your head. It would have been a marvel and a mystery and a new history begun in the invisible (upstairs) sphere of the Infinite if I had answered him ! I don’t even remember what he wrote.

MYSELF: In my letter, he challenges God to give him liberation. Then he will admit its value; otherwise no good. He seems to think that we are striving for it in the next life !

SRI AUROBINDO: But what मूल¹ is he prepared to pay

¹ Price.

for these fine things ? Does he imagine that it is God's business to deliver these goods on order ? Queer kind of business basis for the action of the Divine !

Why don't you disabuse him of the idea and assertion that we don't care a damn for मोक्ष¹ and less than a damn for the next life ?

MYSELF: He wants peace, Force *in this life*. Well, can the Divine give them ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Even if he can, why the deuce should He ?

7. 9. 38

MYSELF: Apropos of that scientist, that was precisely what I had thought of writing to him. Now I can quote you, toning it down, of course.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, you mustn't make it a quotation from me, but you can unload it as your own original merchandise on your unwary customer.

MYSELF: Dilipda has presented me with a fine pen as you can judge from my writing !

SRI AUROBINDO: *Congrats.*

8. 9. 38

MYSELF:

"The silent spheres of thought have opened now
Their hidden gates; I enter like a god
In triumphal majesty; upon my brow
Is crowned an eagle-sun, infinity-shod."

Please don't give a start when you see me entering like a god ! Too much to bear even in poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Sorry ! couldn't help starting. But the start was worse when I got the vision of somebody's shoes on your godlike head.

¹ Liberation.

MYSELF:

“The starry light of earth grows suddenly pale....”

Does this starry light grow pale because of the sun?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Besides, the starry light is below and the sun is on your godlike head above.

9. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“My sleep is now a vast awakening....”

Why does sleep come in?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have made life a “trance” of mystery, so it is quite natural that you should go to sleep.

MYSELF:

“Mortality fades away with dim footfalls

From the measureless beauty of my life divine.”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Life” is not the right word; but if you get upon the mysterious silence of your height divine, all comes in pat enough. Obviously mortality has to walk off when you become so uppish as that.

11. 9. 38

MYSELF: Chand writes there is no letter from me. So, one word, Guru!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well! (That’s one word twice repeated).

12. 9. 38

MYSELF: You must have seen in today’s paper the great news: Prof. Sanjib Chowdhury of Dacca (belonging to Chittagong, hip-hip hurrah!) has got the Nobel Prize in literature — for his book *Songs from the Heights*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Didn’t see it. Who the devil is he! The title of the book doesn’t sound encouraging; but I suppose it can’t be merely Noble Rubbish.

MYSELF: This book has hit !

SRI AUROBINDO: Hit whom ?

MYSELF: I wonder if you have read it. Anyway, a great success for India, Bengal, Chittagong !

SRI AUROBINDO: Never set eyes on it. No use of success unless it is deserved. Can't forget that Kipling for whose poetry I have a Noble contempt (his prose has value, at least the Jungle Book and some short stories) was illegitimately Nobelised by this confounded prize. Contemporary "success" of fame is a deceit and a snare.

13. 9. 38

MYSELF: Can a hush break on a shore ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it can break in the sense of suddenly making a devil of a row.

MYSELF:

"Each movement is a flame of the Infinite
Within the splendour of his aureole."

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously "within" is wrong and the rhythm of the "flame" line though unexceptional otherwise, lacks verve. I don't know whether movement and flame cohere well together; that is perhaps the cause. Anyhow I have emended these 2 lines and patted myself on the back for it.

"Each breath is a movement of the Infinite,
A spark from the splendour of his aureole."

16. 9. 38

MYSELF:

"The fathomless beauty on the soul's blue rim
Wakes with a heaven stirring cry
And mirrors on the heart's tranquil glass...."

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord Christ ! What a yell for beauty to emit ! Besides, the correlation walking with a cry and mirroring is not very convincing. For heaven's sake do

something about this.

MYSELF:

“All drunken shadows of thought fade and
pass....”

SRI AUROBINDO: “Drunken shadows”!! If even shadows become bibulous and stagger, what will become of the Congress and its prohibition laws? Besides, Rajagopalachari is sure to pass a law soon forbidding the publication of any book with the words “wine” and “drunken” in it!

MYSELF: By the way, you had better hurry up with your Supermind descent, Sir. Otherwise Hitler and Mussolini will gunfire it!

SRI AUROBINDO: What has Supermind to do with Hitler or Hitler with Supermind? Do you expect the Supermind to aviate to Berchtesgaden? How the devil can they gunfire S! their aeroplanes can't even reach Pondicherry, much less the Supermind. The descent of S depends on S, not on Hitler or no Hitler.

MYSELF: Things look damnably bad, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Bad enough unless Chamberlain finds a way to wriggle out of it.

17. 9. 38

MYSELF: You are neither writing in my notebook nor sending me your poem. What to do?

SRI AUROBINDO: These things rest on the knees of the gods.

18. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“Into a flame of vision my heart has grown
And leaves behind this frail mortality....”

What follows is not very favourable, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the result of your taking French

leave of mortality — quite natural.

19. 9. 38

MYSELF: Chand writes: "You have said 'Well, well !' That meaning is quite clear to me."

SRI AUROBINDO: Queer ! He seems cleverer than myself.

MYSELF:

"Intimate secrets from invisible spheres

caught...."

SRI AUROBINDO: How the deuce is this scanned and rhythmmed ? Without "caught" it is already a complete pentameter line. After that, "caught" comes in like a cough or hiccup (caught by the spheres ?).

20. 9. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I smack my lips today in satisfaction, because I find the poem damn fine !

SRI AUROBINDO: Umph ! Smile away but I smack also with my hand of correction....

MYSELF: You may not find it so. Ah, what a hard Master you are and what a tough customer !

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't help being that, otherwise you would fall back into a lax and feeble imitative romanticism which would be quite inadvisable. By "romanticism" I mean really "pseudo-romanticism", or sometimes "re-productive romanticism."

MYSELF:

"Thy Presence wraps around my reveried sense,
An air burdened with heavenly frankincense...."

SRI AUROBINDO: I say, this sounds like making a perfumed package. Reveried ?

21. 9. 38

MYSELF: Guru, smile indeed ! You can see whether I have smiled or cried. I've prepared myself for further smacks !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well — it doesn't catch exactly — you haven't put enough verbal or rhythmic vim into it. Lacks vitamin. Have put some vit. A and B into it. Some lines not lined because too much mine.

MYSELF: Dear, dear, what a travail to produce a mouse !

SRI AUROBINDO: The mouse was all right in intention, but its tail was not frisky enough in fact.

22. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“The rich magnificence of the wandering sun
Reflects my splendour from still height to height.”

SRI AUROBINDO: I say, there ought to be a limit to your splendour.

If we transfer the splendour from you to God, it becomes all right — results of your extraordinary condition.

MYSELF: God has appeared twice, can tolerate him ? !

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't — once is enough for him, so I have turned him out of one line, but brought him by pronominal implication into the whole poem throughout. I think that gives it more consistence.

23. 9. 38

MYSELF: Here is a stanza from a poem of mine:

“I gather from some fathomless depth of Mind
Transparent thoughts that float through crystal
(tranced) wind

And weave the dance of the Spirit's mystery

Around the star-fires of infinity."

SRI AUROBINDO: I read your variation first as "stumps". What a magnificent and original image ! the starry stumps (or star-stumps) of infinity ! But I fear, alas, that it would be condemned as surrealistic. I can't make out the variation for crystal. Wearied ? Tired of carrying tons of transparent thoughts ? Surely not !

MYSELF: I have got some joy out of this poem. God knows whether that joy will be justified in your hands, or crucified ! What have you to say, Sir ? Now please, fire away !

SRI AUROBINDO: Exceedingly fine all through.... I might have put 4 lines, but remembering how you shouted against my first four lining effort, I curled back the impulse into myself and put three only.

MYSELF: We are sorry to hear that you can't decide about Bengali overhead poetry. I consider it a defect, Sir, in your poetic supramental make-up, which you should try to mend or remove !

SRI AUROBINDO: Why a defect ? In any case all qualities have their defects, which are also a quality. For the rest, by your logic I ought to be able to pronounce on the merits of Czechoslovakian or Arabic poetry. To pronounce whether a rhythm is O. P. or not one must have an infallible ear for the overtones and undertones of the sound music of the language — that expertness I have not got with regard to Bengali.

24. 9. 38

MYSELF: In yesterday's poem I am much tempted to take the "stumps", even if it is surrealistic. Who cares what it is when you find it magnificent ? It was not "weary wind" but tranced wind.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't do it, sir, or you will get stumped. The "star-stumps" are "magnificent" from the humorous-reckless-epic point of view, but they can't be

taken seriously. Besides, you would have to change all into the same key *e.g.*

“I slog on the boundless cricket field of Mind
Transparent thoughts that cross like crystal wind,
God’s wicket-keeper’s dance of mystery
Around the starry stumps of infinity.”

MYSELF: I am sorry you haven’t put 4 lines. My shout, you see, was due to a shock — seeing 4 lines — a shock of delight.

SRI AUROBINDO: It didn’t sound like it !

MYSELF: You are surprised at Chand’s cleverness ! Well, Sir, your non-committal Supramental answers are sometimes damn puzzling, so I wouldn’t blame him. Anyhow, shall I pass the remark to him ?

SRI AUROBINDO: You can if you like. But he might have known that “Well, well” in English is not a shout of approbation, but philosophically non-committal.

25. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“...a sapphire veil with immortal splendour
glasses.”

SRI AUROBINDO: A veil “glasses” with splendour ? Put in a glass case ? or what ?

26. 9. 38

MYSELF: Why the devil do I feel so sleepy when I try to write at night ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably your inspiration comes from a part of His awakened sleep and goes back to it.

27. 9. 38

MYSELF:

“For thy immutable silences abide

Like vast glaciers behind my body's door."

SRI AUROBINDO: A vast glacier behind a door seems rather impossible. But frozen snow behind a door would convict the housekeeper of negligence.

28. 9. 38

MYSELF: I hear that X is now shedding tears of joy at the sight of apples, oranges, prunes, etc. She has forgotten all her troubles. Tears of sorrow, tears of joy, oh dear !

SRI AUROBINDO: "Fruity" tears of joy. They move me to poetry.

"O apples, apples, oranges and prunes,
You are God's bliss incarnate in a fruit !
Meeting you after many desolate moons
I sob and sniff and make a joyous bruit."

Admit that you yourself could not have done better as a poetic and mantric comment on this touching situation.

1. 10. 38

MYSELF: Your alternation — "God's vineyard" sounds rather funny, Sir ! You seem to be trying to be modernistic !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I'm blowed ! What is there modern about "vineyard" ? Vineyards are as old as Adam or almost, at any rate they existed before the flood.

MYSELF: By what modern alchemy you make — "In God's vineyard of ecstasies" 3 foot ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not ? I have anapaestised the line, that is all. No alchemy needed modern or ancient. I don't see what is the difficulty.

MYSELF: And "all" you use as singular, putting the verb *harbours* ? Possible ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce ! You don't know that all can be used collectively in the singular, e.g. "All

he does is mad." "All is beautiful here." ?

7. 10. 38

MYSELF: Seeing this incomplete piece of fire-work, you are sure to swear at me at every step !

SRI AUROBINDO: Haven't sufficient energy or time to swear at every step, — only where blasphemy is needed.

8. 10. 38

MYSELF: This time I have kicked out "infinite, eternal, solitude, etc." from my poem !

SRI AUROBINDO: Congratulations !

9. 10. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I fear you will find the poem suffering from the first signs of flu !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sir, your flu has made you fluid and fluent, and the hammering headache has hammered out a fine poem. Wa Allah !

MYSELF: It doesn't seem to know what it's telling about !

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see what's wrong with it. It seems to know what it is talking about although you may not know it.

10. 10. 38

MYSELF: What, Sir, are you aware of the raging epidemic (flu) havoc in the Ashram ? How is it that the Ashram has become so vulnerable to it this time — the first ?

SRI AUROBINDO: There has been a "progressive" increase in that respect during the last ten years and this seems to be its (present) culmination. In that respect

more people are being "advanced sadhaks".

MYSELF: Now I hear that V is the latest victim.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ramkrishna is promising to join the dance.

11. 10. 38

MYSELF: Guru, do you see the overhead reflected in this poem? I've hammered it!

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know but the headache is also reflected, which accounts for the number of alterations that have to be made.

MYSELF: What's this, Sir? My feverishness persists!

SRI AUROBINDO: Why on earth is your body so attached to the headache and fever?

MYSELF: I don't suppose this condition has any salutary effect on sadhana, that it should linger, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not in the least — needn't keep it on with that idea!

13. 10. 38

MYSELF:

"A touch of thy hand, a brief glitter of thy eyes
Releases unknown springs from my body's
earth...."

SRI AUROBINDO: Perspiration?

MYSELF:

"The consciousness awakes in a surprise
As if the whole being had a new birth."

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord! sir — these two lines are sheer prose in build and substance.

MYSELF: Guru, how is this poem?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, the scansion and rhythm seem rather forced at places and some of the ideas are rather headachy e.g. a caress leading a caravan and the suggestion of profuse perspiration and the smile of snow-

cool fire. However, being free from headache, I have made a fine thing out of it.

MYSELF: There doesn't seem to be any improvement in the medical atmosphere, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: None. Even all the three Doctors gave the example of getting ferociously ill ! The city population follow মহাজনো গতো যেন পশু ।¹

MYSELF: By the way, I hope you received my prayer for poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I did, but my Muse refused to work.

14. 10. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I almost wanted to stop writing poetry due to my recent failures.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are too easily discouraged. Such drops in the Inspiration are inevitable when one constantly writes poetry.

15. 10. 38

MYSELF: Can a 'closed door' seal anything ?

SRI AUROBINDO: No — never did.

MYSELF: You say I am easily discouraged ? In spite of my heroic pulling on, you say that ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Heroic in spite of easy and frequent discouragement.

17.10. 38

[Apropos of a poem of mine in which Sri Aurobindo had made corrections]:

Ahem ! What do you say to that ? It seems to me that between us we have produced something remarkable.

MYSELF: I find that I have written about 186 poems

¹ Path followed by great men.

from March to August, and of which *only* 15 are exceedingly fine.

SRI AUROBINDO: 15 poems exceedingly fine in 6 months ! It is a colossal number !

18. 10. 38

MYSELF: 15 — a colossal number ! Joking, Sir ? I am tempted to say like Monodhar — “I beg to differ with you !”

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all, quite serious. If you take the short lyrics and sonnets (not longer poems) of great poets like Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, how many are there of the first class written in a whole lifetime ? Thirty or forty perhaps at the outside. And you have written 15 in 6 months.

22. 10. 38

MYSELF: Ah, here am I again ! You had three days' respite, no more, Sir ! Now you will have to scratch your head to find out the right words and expressions !

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't need to scratch my head — I have only to look at it from above and the words bubble up of themselves — at once or after a time. When they don't, all the scratching in the world is of no avail.

MYSELF: I don't expect anything great here, for the head is dry, mind is weary and the soul languorous, so ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it isn't either dry or weary or languorous.

24. 10. 38

MYSELF:

“...While old moth-wings of weary passion
die....”

SRI AUROBINDO: This moth-wings and weary passion

come in quite gratuitously from old poetic habit, a half-veiled memory of forgotten lines.

MYSELF: After a long time my old self is trying to assert itself: lethargy, depression, ennui, etc., etc. aftermath of fever?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously — a stage of it like the rash — a sort of psychological dengue fall.

27. 10. 38

MYSELF: I have doubt here about the lines 4, 7, 12 and the last. They seem to be simple!

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, these lines are simply exquisite (simply in both senses) — all four indeed, precisely because they are so simple that the emotion and experience go straight through without a veil.

31. 10. 38

SRI AUROBINDO: Did I send you an English poem of Dilip's along with the Bengali ones yesterday?

1. 11. 38

MYSELF: No, sir, you didn't send me Dilipda's English poem.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the deuce has happened to it then? These dematerialisations are very annoying.

2. 11. 38

MYSELF: You have forgotten a word in yesterday's poem. A blank remains. Or you can't make out your own writing. That's fine, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: The word looks like "fantasia" but I am not at all sure — it might be anything else. It is altogether irrational to expect me to read my own writ-

ing. I write for others to read, not for myself — it is their business to puzzle out the words. I try to read when I am asked, but I have to make a strong use of second sight with a mélange of intuition, reasoned conjectural speculation and random guessing.

3. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, this poem is so simple (and bare at places ?) that I fear it approaches flatness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sir — well, sir — well, sir ! I force myself not to break out into strong and abusive language; but really, really, you *must* mend your defective sense of poetic values. This is another triumph. You must have had, besides the foiled romantic, a metaphysical poet of the 17th century latent in you, who is breaking out now from time to time. Donne himself after having got relieved in the other world of his ruggedness, mannerisms and ingenious intellectualities, might have written this poem.

MYSELF: In English does “journey to God” mean anything ?

SRI AUROBINDO: It means everything.

6. 11. 38

MYSELF: Last night I got stuck at every stanza and had to send you and Mother frequent S. O. S. to rescue me. Do you really receive these signals or your impersonal forces intercept them and do the necessary ?

SRI AUROBINDO: As we receive some hundreds of such signals daily, we are obliged to be impersonal about it, otherwise we would have no time for anything else.

7. 11. 38

MYSELF: Ah, now I see ! That’s why my poems are

not always uniformly super-successful or even successful. Only when your personal Force intervenes, they turn out a miracle. I thought so, Sir, I thought so !

SRI AUROBINDO: Man ! Your explanation is too neat to be quite the thing.

8. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, ah, what a difficulty I had in writing this poem ! And yet it is not satisfactory !

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid, not. As it stands it is a struggling failure. Now just look at my alterations and see how finely easy it was all the time ! Wa Allah ! It seems to me at the moment one of the finest poems we have yet written. Praise be !

9. 11. 38

MYSELF: This time, Sir, the poem looks to me damn fine. I know you will say, "Well, well !" — but we have very rarely agreed on any point ! But does it really leave your plexus cold ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very fine, yes, and perfect in expression; but I don't know about damn fine, for that is a tremendous superlative. Such a solemn phrase should only be used when you write something equalling Shakespeare at his best.

MYSELF: Do you still stick to your remark on yesterday's poem ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, my enthusiasm has abated a little except for the first 2 stanzas and line 3 of the third....

10. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, 'Shakespeare at his best' ? The very name of Shakespeare makes my breath shake with fear !

And to talk of equalling him at his best, oh, people will call me mad, Sir. If someone *else* had told me that, I would have called him mad ! But I don't know what to say to you ! You stagger me so much !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but look at logic. G. B. S. declares himself the equal, if not superior, of Shakespeare. You write better poetry than Shaw ever did (which is easy because he never wrote any). So you are the equal (if not the superior) of Shakespeare.

MYSELF: But, if I remember right, some of my lines you have called 'damn fine' ! So ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Did I indeed ? Then, logically, it must have been equal to the best of Shakespeare, otherwise it couldn't have been so damned. This also is logic.

11. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, not at all satisfied ! nothing flashing !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, you are difficult to satisfy. It may not flash but it gleams all right.

MYSELF: Besides, you broke my power of judgment on yesterday's poem which I thought was a triumph !

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, perhaps I shall consider it a triumph if I read it again after six months. I won't insist on Horace's rule that in order to judge rightly poetry that has been newly written you must keep it in your desk unseen for ten years and then read it again and see what you then think of it !

MYSELF: I give you the lines which you have called 'damn fine', Sir !

"While the whole universe seems to be a cry
To the apocalypt-vision of thy Name."

SRI AUROBINDO: Mm, yes, I can't deny the fineness — but perhaps I ought not to have damned it without proper regard to Shakespeare.

MYSELF: I know your enthusiasm will abate now, and

perhaps you will only say, "Yes, they are very satisfying !"

SRI AUROBINDO: Why do you object to a poem being called satisfying ? It is high praise.

MYSELF: Or you will say that yesterday's 'damn fine' can't be equal to today's, what ? I find your remarks exceedingly mysterious which justifies your being a "Mystery-Man" !

SRI AUROBINDO: Which remarks ? On Shakespeare ? They were logical, not mystic.

MYSELF: And what about the poem I requested you to write ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Which poem ?

12. 11. 38

MYSELF: 'Which poem ?' you asked, Sir ! Yes indeed ! My poem I requested you to rewrite, Sir !

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh that ! It is still in cold storage. No flame as yet for cooking it.

MYSELF:

"I gain the summit of thy loneliness
In whose vast spaces like an eagle I dwell
And drink from thy Spirit-cup a measureless
Delight, O Mystery inscrutable !"

I hope you won't say, "Drink like an eagle !"

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid I have to — an eagle drinking in vast spaces from a cup is too extraordinary a phenomenon.

MYSELF: Guru, how is this one ? I won't say anything more, for you will say, "It is difficult to satisfy you !" Well, a strain of dissatisfaction is a good thing, no ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, but a strain is enough !

MYSELF: By the way, I am surprised to see that in spite of 3 marginal lines over the whole poem, you call it only 'very fine'. Not a mysterious remark ?

SRI AUROBINDO: How is it mysterious ? What do you expect three lines to come to then ? Damn fine ? That

would be Shakespeare.

14. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, three poems in one day! What do you think of it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Stupendous!

16. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I wrote this poem today. It gave me such a damn thrill that I thought I must share it with you tonight.

SRI AUROBINDO: The thrill but not the damn.

17. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, C writes to me to ask your opinion on the 'tampering with figures'. Can there be any opinion? Really, I don't know what to do with the fellow. But I suppose in worldly life such things are necessary?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not in the worldly life, but perhaps in the Corporation life. All this promises a bad look out when India gets Purna Swaraj. Mahatma Gandhi is having bad qualms about Congress corruption already. What will it be when Purna Satyagraha reigns all over India?

19. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, old stuff and poor expressions in this poem?

SRI AUROBINDO: ...I rather fancy the resulting "stuff" — *not* poor I think. I am inclined to give it three cheers, I mean three lines.

20. 11. 38

MYSELF:

“Creation born from his motionless delight....”

Motionless delight ? Have you experienced it, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. Why on earth shouldn't delight be motionless ? What kind of delight should the immutable Brahman have, for instance, if not an immobile delight ?

MYSELF: (Dilip's telegram: Nirod Ashram, arriving tomorrow evening train. Heldil.) Guru, this is from Dilip — Heldil is not he, of course. But what is it then ? Can your Supramental Intuition solve ? But mine has: it is H for Hashi, e for Esha, l for Lila, — Dil of course, you know. What do you think, Sir, of my Intuition ? He perhaps thought he'd beat us !

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see how he could with the Dil there to illumine the Hel.

22. 11. 38

MYSELF: Guru, I couldn't give much time today, as I was all the time thinking of finishing the poem, to catch your train ! I hope it is not altogether a bad business, what ? Most of it looks like repetition.

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be repetition but is an exceedingly fine repetition. I was going to say “damned” but Shakespeare only withdrew the expletive....